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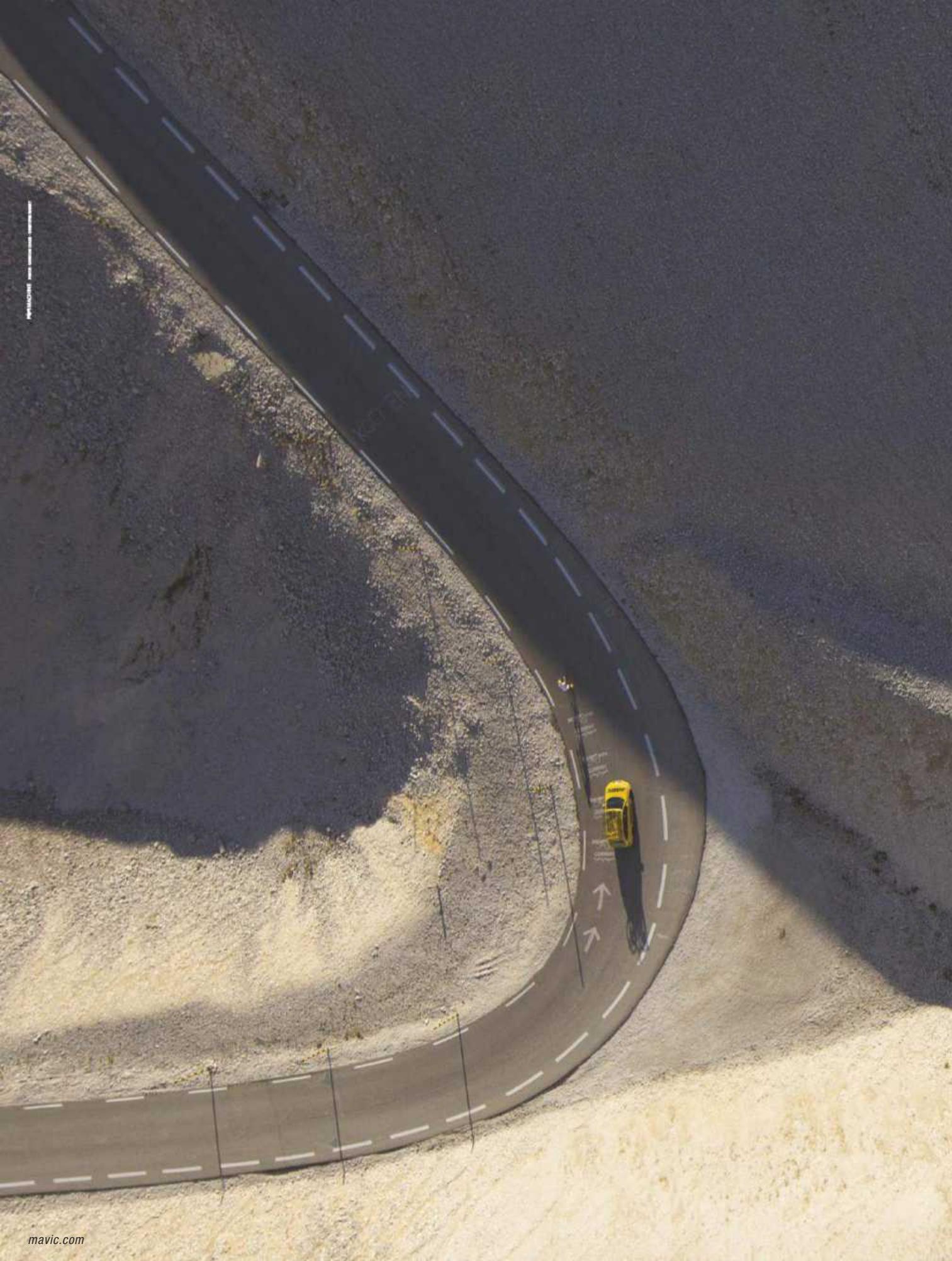
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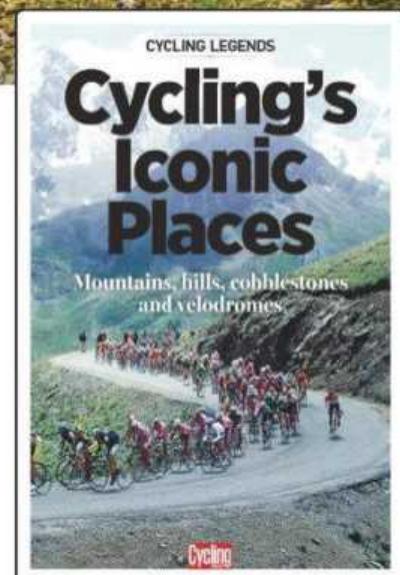
The third in our **Cycling Legends** series is a tribute to these places. Using words and the reflections of great riders, as well as incredible photographs, it tells the story of the mountains, hills, cobbled roads and velodromes that help make the sport of cycling the great spectacle that it is.

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THIS ISSUE 12/11

Rewards and responsibilities

If you ever see me at a fund-raising dinner, you have my permission to tie my hands to my chair. Five years ago I spent £450 on Geraint Thomas's British champs jersey at the Braveheart dinner (I thought the bidding would go much higher, but no sooner had I bid than the auctioneer shouted 'sold!'). This weekend, at the Dave Rayner dinner, I put in a bid I couldn't afford for an Ian Stannard jersey.

It was his Sky jersey from the final day of this year's Tour, and I had set myself a modest limit, assuming it would sell for more, but the bidding happened a lot quicker than I had expected and between me raising my hand and the auctioneer seeing it, the price had more than doubled from what I wanted to pay. Luckily the bids carried on up to well over £2,000 and the panic subsided.

It was another enjoyable night at the Rayner dinner, an event that always reminds me how lucky we are in this country to have such a generous community of cycling fans who are prepared to put their hands in their pockets to support talented young riders.

The dinner was my first outing as the new editor of this magazine. It's both an honour and a privilege to take on the role, and as we approach our 125th year, a great responsibility. One that I can assure you, I take very seriously.



Simon Richardson
Editor



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Britain on course for Rio world record

Wiggins-led squad getting faster all the time

Nick Bull

Sir Bradley Wiggins and Great Britain's men's team pursuit squad are on course to break the world record in their hunt for Olympic gold in Rio next summer, according to head coach Heiko Salzwedel.

The team, the majority of whom this week will attend an altitude training camp in Tenerife, showed glimpses of record-breaking speed during their European Championships triumph in the Netherlands last month.

And in the fifth-place final at the Track World Cup meeting in Cali, Colombia, on October 30, the team — comprising Wiggins, Steven Burke, Owain Doull and Andy Tennant — had Britain's current world record of 3-51.659 in sight until they caught their German counterparts.

"The boys were still lacking confidence before the meeting," Salzwedel revealed, "but they moved on to 3-52 pace against Germany and that's not the end — there's much more potential to come."

"It was a big step, even if we didn't produce the result."

Renovation work at the Barra Velodrome in Rio, which will host next year's Olympic showdown on August 11 and 12, has yet to be completed.

However, Salzwedel believes that, should the track and conditions inside match those during the London Olympic Games, the GB team could break the fabled three-minute 50 barrier.

"It's pure speculation right now, but if it's like London, for sure we're going to be under 3-50," he added.

Fast and motivated

Having worked with Wiggins on his Hour record in June, Salzwedel praised the 2012 Tour de France champion's commitment to team pursuing upon his departure from full-time road racing earlier this year.

"I was not sure if he could motivate himself to this level of work again, but he has," said Salzwedel. "He has shown he's a true team player — he's realised his responsibility within that group: when he is fired up, he motivates the whole team."

Wiggins is currently following an individual training programme designed to turn him back into a pure track rider, leading to his absence from Tenerife.

Ed Clancy is also missing the trip as he recovers from a slipped disc sustained in September. However, he could return to competition alongside Mark Cavendish — who recently has been training at the Manchester velodrome — at the Hong Kong round of the World Cup, which takes place on January 16-17.

Salzwedel said of Wiggins's training: "Bradley lost a lot of muscle mass when he was focusing on the road, so he's trying to rebuild that to help his power and strength."

MY VIEW...

Nick Bull

Cycling Weekly news writer

Following their nadir at the 2014 Track Worlds, Britain's male team pursuit squad are shaping up nicely for Rio. With the Australian squad reportedly stalling, all bodes well for next summer.





British sprint squad under pressure

James Gaukroger

Without having notched up any major international victories in Olympic disciplines since 2013, Great Britain will have to send its strongest sprint squads to the final two rounds of this winter's Track World Cup series to make sure of Rio 2016 qualification.

British riders won gold medals in four of the six sprint events at London 2012, but the Cali Track World Cup meeting at the end of October was the latest high-profile meeting that the sprinters came away from empty-handed.

World Cup points are required to qualify riders for the next year's Olympics, and the team's lack of recent high placings, combined with the emerging European nations, means GB coaches will send Rio 2016 hopefuls to compete in next month's second round in New Zealand and the series finale in Hong Kong early next year.

"We were planning on sending a weakened men's squad to Hong Kong [in January]," explained GB head sprint coach Justin Grace, "but with the emergence of the Polish team riding so strongly and the Russians being a bit of an unknown, the chances are we will end up running a number-one or close to a number-one squad to make sure that qualification doesn't sneak up from behind on us a little bit. As we are playing catch-up a little bit off the back of last season, we'll send a number-one women's team [to both rounds]."

Grace also insisted that Jason Kenny remains a genuine medal contender in Rio. The 27-year-old, a three-time Olympic champion, placed seventh in the sprint in Cali but didn't make it through the keirin qualifying round.

"As far as the racing and the tactics went, [seventh] was one of Jason's better results," added Grace. "There was certainly not disappointment from that result."



One target Grand Tour start

Newly promoted team aim high

James Gaukroger

One Pro Cycling are eyeing up a maiden Grand Tour start in 2016, after it was announced on Monday that the British team had successfully stepped up to Pro Continental level.

Owner Matt Prior acknowledged that earning selection for a three-week race would be a long shot next season but explained that the team would target selection for WorldTour races in 2016.

"We definitely won't be going for the Tour de France but we might have a look at the other two [Giro d'Italia and Vuelta a España]," he said. "It's an outside chance at this stage."

"We want to be involved in the biggest races — we want to get selected for as many WorldTour races as possible; we want to challenge ourselves and pit ourselves against the best to make sure we can learn and get better."

The team will move from the Continental division into an elite group of European teams that form the professional ranks below the WorldTour teams, the same level at which Europcar and MTN-Qhubeka operated this year. One Pro Cycling were founded in 2015 and competed on the British domestic circuit in their first season. The team recently announced the signings of Matt Goss, Steele Von Hoff and Kristian House for next year.

Prior hopes the move will help One become more attractive to sponsors while using the popularity of cycling in the UK to boost their chances of receiving invitations to some of the biggest races in Europe.

"Hopefully people will see that having another big British team is a good thing," Prior added.

"We don't want to make up the numbers, and I believe we have the roster that will allow us to be competitive."

Weekly column Rob Hayles



"I set about my workout. Three very long hours later, I staggered out of the garage, jelly-legged and mentally scarred for life"

Hands up who's put their summer kit away for the winter? I know I have. So the other day when there was not only clear blue sky, but temperatures in the high teens, I had to check on my smartphone that it was actually November. However, one big disadvantage of having warmer days this time of year is the tendency for a bit of fog at night. Now, this really can be a problem for everyone. It certainly gave me a bit of an issue a few years ago.

It was early on in my track season preparation and my endurance workload was fairly high. This meant that between the days with sessions on the Manchester velodrome, I was having to get some good quality work done out on the road bike. I woke up the morning of one of these days to find I couldn't see across the road due to the thick fog hanging there. This was not a good sign of things to come.

I can remember only a few days previously, after Geraint Thomas told us that he'd had a really good three-and-a-half-hour session that week in his conservatory, I was ashamed to admit that I'd never been able to manage much more than an hour on the turbo.

So with this in mind, I went about warming the coffee machine, while I mentally prepared for the dreaded session I was going to have to put myself through. With my music playlist of choice locked, and my flask of multiple espressos loaded, I set about my workout. Three very long hours later, I staggered out of the garage, jelly-legged and mentally scarred for life.

That evening I spoke to the mountain bike and cyclo-cross legend Nick Craig, who lives two minutes from me. I'd had a missed call from him. But before I had time to tell him about my day, he went into one about what an amazing day it had been for riding. "Eh?" was my reply. "What about the fog?"

"Oh yeah," he said. "Incredible how it has hung over the village all day, while 300 yards in any direction there were clear blue skies." With all my music playing, I'd not heard my phone ringing. Hands up who still thinks wearing headphones while riding isn't dangerous?

Former double world track champion, Rob Hayles is a pundit for TV and radio. He's also a coffee connoisseur and garden shed inventor



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Going the Extra Mile

Emily Kay's Team GB Cervélo T4



CW gets up close with the wind-cheating track bike belonging to British Cycling Academy rider Emily Kay

Photos: Russell Ellis

The Cervélo T4 is the bike that the Great Britain track team will use in the build-up to next year's Rio Olympics. It's a new addition for the riders in 2015, following British Cycling's decision to change from Pinarello and its own UKSI bikes to the Canadian brand, in a new five-year partnership announced this spring.

This bike belongs to British Cycling Academy rider Emily Kay, a member of British Cycling's Senior Academy women's endurance programme; it is the same model Laura Trott rode to win gold in the omnium at the Track World Cup in Cali, Colombia, on November 1.



SEAT TUBE

That large void between rear wheel and seat tube will be closed on race day. GB mechanics will adapt the length of the chain (by taking out links) to ensure that the rear disc wheel and tyre will sit snug against the frame, with minimal clearance, in order to optimise aerodynamics.



FRAME

The red carbon frame pictured is a 51cm, the smallest size offered by Cervélo. The profile and tubing is very similar to that of Cervélo's P Series time trial frame, with its aero credentials adapted to work on a track bike.



HANDLEBARS

The bike comes with Alpina bars. Rather than bar tape, Kay prefers to use rubber grips more commonly seen on sprinters' bikes. The bottom of the bars sits just above the front tyre; this position is passed as race-legal under UCI rule 1.3.022, which requires the bars' contact point with the rider to be above the top of the tyre.



DRIVETRAIN

Kay's bike comes equipped with standard Sugino cranks, a Shimano bottom bracket, Cervélo bladed fork and Reynolds chain. The only difference between this bike for Academy rider Kay and the ones used by riders such as Trott on BC's Podium Programme is the lack of SRM power meter.



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British team transfer latest

Domestic squads take shape for 2016

Nick Bull and James Gaukroger

Britain's top domestic teams have been busy creating their rosters for the 2016 season. Following JLT-Condor's roster announcement in October, *Cycling Weekly* looks at the latest signings by Raleigh-GAC, NFTO and Team Wiggins.

RALEIGH-GAC

Raleigh-GAC have made a number of youthful additions to their team for 2016, with sports director Cherie Pridham describing their approach as "a changing of the guard".

Braveheart-funded riders Craig Wallace (21) and Fraser Martin (19) join, along with Karl Baillie (18) and Jack

Escritt (17), who make the step up from the HMT Academy squad.

Raleigh-GAC are keen to develop young talent as, according to Pridham, "there doesn't seem to be much helping that transition from when riders come out of a good team as juniors — but all credit to squads like HMT, who show their young riders how to progress."



Raleigh-GAC (left): flush with youthful new talent

Baillie praised his previous team, saying: "What Mark [Barry, HMT sports director] and Tony [Barrett, head of care and logistics] do is unbelievable really. I wouldn't be at Raleigh if it wasn't for the team."

Raleigh have one more rider to announce for next year's roster, while the departing Ian Wilkinson is expected to join Pedal Heaven for 2016.

NFTO

After opting against moving up to UCI Pro Continental (second division) status, familiarity is the key for NFTO's 2016 line-up.

Eight of their nine-man roster announced thus far rode with the team in 2015, with former Team Sky rider Josh Edmondson the only new arrival to date. Tom Barras has also moved into the team manager role in place of the departed Dave Povall.

"It's unusual for a team to keep so many of its existing riders, and over the next two to three years, that's something we'd like to continue doing," said Barras.

"John [Wood, NFTO owner] is all about teamwork and getting a team that gels together and are happy together. That's why we've kept the core together because we all gel so well.

"[NFTO] are not actively looking for new riders; if a few come along that can strengthen us then that would be great."

TEAM WIGGINS

Highly-rated youngster Scott Davies says he signed for Team Wiggins based on his gut feeling.

The 20-year-old Welshman was planning on spending a second year on British Cycling's Senior Academy in 2016 before accepting a late offer to join Team Wiggins.

"If I can have two fantastic offers on the table each year for the rest of my career, I'd be really happy," joked Davies, the British under-23 time trial champion for the last two years.

In addition to British track stars aiming to make the team pursuit squad at Rio 2016, Wiggins's line-up for next season ties in more with its development aims than in 2015. Ashley Dennis (20), Sam Harrison (23), James Knox (20), Chris Latham (21), Michael O'Loughlin (18) and Dan Pearson (21) have all signed.

■ For a full list of 2016 team rosters, visit po.st/BritTeams2016

Graham Watson's 2016 Cycling Calendar



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Field dominates in Durham

National cyclo-cross champ takes third series win

Chris Marshall-Bell

After extending his 100 per cent record in Durham on Sunday, British cyclo-cross champion Ian Field bemoaned the lack of quality competition in the National Trophy.

The Hargroves Cycles-Ridley rider took his third victory of this winter's series on the muddy Durham Racecourse, finishing 46 seconds ahead of David Fletcher (Pines-Felt-Envy), with Nick Craig (Scott Racing) another nine seconds behind in third.

Twenty-nine-year-old Field's big goals, though, are top-10 placings in World Cup events; he has finished 26th and 27th in the first two rounds this season.

"It couldn't be going much better and I've got to enjoy it because it hasn't always been like this and it won't always be like this," Field said of his domestic racing, but added, "it's frustrating at the moment because

no one is really pushing me in the National Trophy."

Series leader Hannah Payton (Team Kinesis) placed third in her attempt to claim a hat-trick of series wins in the women's category. Beth Crompton (North West CC) triumphed, seven seconds ahead of Amira Mellor (Oldfield-Paul Miles Cycles).

Elsewhere, Britain's Nikki Harris took bronze at the European Championships in Huijbergen, the Netherlands on Sunday, the fourth year in a row that the 28-year-old has finished on the podium.

The race, run on sandy, dry conditions, was shown live on TV across the continent for the first time ever, with Belgium's Sanne Cant retaining her title ahead of compatriot Jolien Verschueren.

Crompton rode to 13th place in the women's U23 race before returning home to compete in the Trophy. With no elite men's race, Thomas Pidcock came eighth in the junior men's event.

Photo: Andy Jones



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Cav receives doctorate

Mark Cavendish has another title he can add to his palmarès: he was last week awarded an honorary doctorate in science from the University of Chester. Elsewhere, Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme and Sir Gary Verity are to receive honorary Doctor of Letters degrees from York St John University, for contributions to cycling worldwide and promoting cycling in Yorkshire.

Sky and Rapha part ways

Team Sky will no longer wear Rapha kit beyond the end of the 2016 season, after the company announced an end to their four-year partnership. The British brand replaced Adidas as the squad's clothing manufacturer in 2012.

TV appeal for CiCLE Classic

Organisers of Britain's longest-running UCI-ranked one-day race, the Rutland-Melton CiCLE Classic, have launched a crowd-funding appeal to raise £15,000 to get the race on TV. Race director Colin Clews hopes to get a highlights show aired on ITV4 and Eurosport. Donations can be made via the JustGiving website.

New organiser sought for Peter Young Memorial

The Peter Young Memorial Road Race, run by Hounslow and District Wheelers for the past 44 years, is looking for new organisers. Current organiser Chris Lovibond explained that the members are now "too old to have the enthusiasm to run the event". The club is able to offer consultancy to whoever takes on the event. To enquire, call Lovibond on 07415 012067.

Froome's Rio recce

Chris Froome was in Brazil last week to recce the route for next year's Rio Olympic road race. With hilly courses in both the road race and time trial, Froome has his sights on a gold medal, even though it comes just 17 days after the Tour de France, which he aims to win for the third time.

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Guest column

Russell Downing

"There is more to write about than just my knee, but I'm a cyclist — a sore knee is a big deal for a cyclist. I'm raring to go, but I need to get my knee sorted..."

Iwish I had more to write about but my knee. OK, I have, but a sore knee is a big thing for a cyclist. It's a hangover from my crash in the Vattenfall Cyclassics one-day in August. It's hurt off and on ever since, and now every time I go out on my bike, it flares up. Anyway, I've had an MRI and I'm on my way to see the consultant after I've written this. I think I've torn a meniscus [a piece of cartilage], so a little op should fix it.

It's a pain in both senses of the word, because I'm really keen to get stuck in. I've had my rest, had a short holiday in Egypt, and I want to start training. I'm not stressing at the moment, even if it sounds like I am, but I will get a bit worried if it doesn't clear up soon, which it should after a bit of treatment.

I'm looking forward to next year, when, as you probably already know, I'll be riding for JLT-Condor. We've got a good programme with some familiar races along with some new ones in Asia. I'll start racing in Australia, but I'm not going out early to do the Bay Crits. I'll join the boys in January, and I've just heard for definite we've got a ride in the Sun Tour. So all being well, after Christmas I'll be in Oz preparing for that and start my season there.

We've had our first meeting and I've sorted out my first goals, which are a good ride in the Tour de Yorkshire, the Lincoln Grand Prix and all the stuff in April and May, which is when I usually start going well. Then after that I'll be dipping in and out of the Tour Series to help the team. All in all there's a lot to look forward to — so long as I get this knee sorted.

I'm raring to go. I've had my retro mountain bike out and have done a few fun rides. We've got a great training group up here in South Yorkshire and I can't wait to get out with them. And now [brother] Dean's got sorted after his crash, he's coming out with us. It's just like old times. I've just got to sort this knee out. Sorry, I'm going on again. I'll stop now.

Russell Downing is a former British road race champion. During the off-season he enjoys bingeing on caramel slices and Guinness

To do this week...

Go

Revolution Series, Lee Valley Velodrome, Saturday, November 14

The popular track series comes to London for its only visit to the capital this winter. Sky's Pete Kennaugh and Geraint Thomas are among those in action. Tickets for both sessions (1-4pm, 7-10pm) are available at revolution.seetickets.com; the latter will be shown live on Eurosport 2 at 7pm.

Race

Yorkshire Points cyclo-cross series, round 5A, Barnsley, Sunday, November

The fifth round of the Yorkshire cyclo-cross series takes place in the name of charity. Organiser Ivan Boyes will hand over profits from the event to fund research into Cystic Fibrosis, a disease that both his brothers suffer from. The course is "a spectacular venue set next to the Wentworth Castle stately home with fantastic views," says Boyes. Entries are available for all ages (£2 Children, £7 Juniors, £14 Adults) on the day. po.st/YorkCrossCharity

Ride

Wiggle Bitter Beast Sportive, Dorset, November 15

Set along Dorset's Jurassic Coastline and offering views of Poole Harbour, Corfe Castle and even the Isle of Wight, this sportive is perfect for anybody fancying a challenging mid-November ride. Routes of 40 and 71 miles are available; entry on the day costs £36. po.st/WiggleBeast

Corfe Castle:
the beauty of
the Beast



Read

Ride the Revolution by Suze Clemitson

Cycling author Suze Clemitson has collected a number of wide-ranging insights from women for a behind-the-scenes look at the world of cycling for this book. Contributors such as Marianne Vos and Rochelle Gilmore help make this an eye-opening read.

RRP £16.99 po.st/RideTheRev

Rayner dinner raises £30k

Over £30,000 was raised for the next generation in British cycling on Saturday night at the 21st annual dinner of the Dave Rayner Memorial Fund in Leeds.

Steve Cummings, Adam Yates and Owain Doull were guests of honour at the sold-out event at New Dock Hall, which was the biggest in its recent history and was attended by over 600 guests.

£17,000 was made from an auction of cycling memorabilia donated by pro riders, including a Team Sky jersey from the final stage of this year's Tour de France, donated unwashed and signed by former Rayner-supported rider Ian Stannard.

Thirty-two riders were backed by the fund in 2015. Andy Leigh, 20, was awarded the Lewis Barry Award for outstanding performance of the season, having earned a contract with the Continental-level Colba-Superhano Ham team.



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THE BIG QUESTION

“What’s your verdict on the 2016 Tour de France route?”

Pleased that there isn’t a cobbled stage, as they are always such a lottery, needing luck rather than strength to survive.

Andy Miller

It’s good to see more stages for the pure sprinters to give them something to aim for. Last year’s sprint stages turned out to be a bit of a shambles. Will be fantastic to see Dimension Data lining it up for Mark Cavendish.

Graham Pursey

Really pleased that there are two individual time trial stages, and that they are markedly different. However, I know it’s not very fashionable, but I will miss a team time trial. There’s something great about seeing a well-drilled team nailing a TTT and it reinforces that pro cycling, and the Tour de France, is a team sport.

Dave Simmonds

Not enough miles in Yorkshire.

Huw Spacey

While Boris Johnson may have permanently messed up the Entente Cordiale by doing a U-turn on London hosting the Tour’s Grand Départ, at least next year’s start in Normandy makes it easy for us Brits to pop over the Channel and catch the racing with ease.

Rachael Weston

I’m looking forward to stage 20... I know all the roads and the climbs are epic.

Philip Astfalck

It’s looking like another route to suit Chris Froome — but then it’s hard to see a route that wouldn’t suit him! It will be great to see Alberto Contador do battle with Froomey for one last time — and hopefully we’ll see the emergence of a new Tour challenger in the shape of Tom Dumoulin.

Michael Davey



I like the fact that the Tour organiser has included a selection of lesser-known mountain climbs in the 2016 route, which should spring some surprises for the riders and keep all of us fans watching. I’m not keen on time bonuses at the finish, though, as the race should be won straight, not on extra bits of time added here and there.

Jack Stubbs

Bit of a boring opening week compared to 2015’s route. A series of flat stages may be fun for the sprinters, but might become a bit monotonous for spectators. Each stage will feature a break of four or five riders (two of them French), which will inevitably get caught within the final 10km to set up a bunch finish. At

least we’ll have the beautiful scenery of northern France to look at.

Simon Marsh

With the return of more sprint stages, it’s almost as if ASO are trying to stop Peter Sagan from winning the green jersey for a fifth consecutive time. It won’t work — although not many will be happy to see Sagan swap his rainbow jersey for a green one.

Jenny Strong

Next week’s big question...

What do you think has been the worst cycling invention in history?

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Letters

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Biking back to health

STAR LETTER
I am 58 years old and suffer from psoriatic arthritis. Four years ago, I was in so much pain that some days I was unable to even walk. I was put on a drug that made a world of difference, and in May my specialist asked me what exercise I did. I told her I used to cycle and swim.

I made a decision to take up cycling, so I bought a cheaper alloy-framed bike in September to see whether I could manage some serious cycling. It went well, I really enjoyed it. I have done 1,045 miles since June and my longest distance is 90 miles.

To anyone with an illness like mine: get on a bike. I feel so much fitter and now have a better quality of life.

David Smith, email

Steel's final Pickwick pipe

I was delighted to read your tribute to the late Ian Steel. I am pleased to say that I had the pleasure — one might say honour — of meeting him on a regular basis over the last few years each time he was invited to the luncheons of the Pickwick Bicycle Club.

He did not become a member of the club but he obviously held it in great regard, as there was a club symbol, the churchwarden's clay pipe — provided to members and guests at the Pickwick at each luncheon — displayed on his coffin.

Michael Radford, email

Watt the heck?

I took my nine-year-old son — an avid *Cycling Weekly* reader — to the Cycling Show. It was our first

boys-only weekend away, and we had a fantastic day. The staff on the stands were enthusiastic, accommodating and encouraging, so my son got to try lots of bikes and gear.

I have been considering buying a Wattbike, so we found their stand and I asked if my son could have a go on one. Unfortunately, the answer was no.

Elite, on the other hand, were absolutely fantastic, even removing the seat so he could try a sprint finish and win a bidon, which took pride of place on his bike on our Sunday morning ride.

Simon Hollingsworth, email

Doc's mirthful medicine

I would just like to say a big thank you to Mr Hutchinson [it's Dr, he insists — ed.] for last week's column about your winter hack. I'm off work currently with depression, which I suffer in cycles — excuse the pun.

Despite cycling daily, I haven't managed a smile for three weeks. Your column made me laugh out loud numerous times as I read and reread it.

Nic Footer, email

Poor Rory

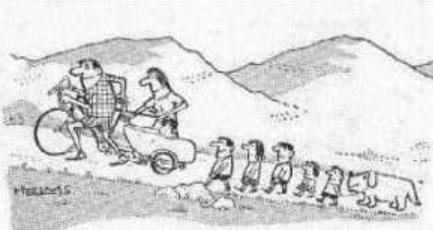
I have to say I really feel for Rory Palmer, the cyclist recently prosecuted for riding at 41mph in Richmond Park. Not only was he fined a staggering £400, he now faces expulsion from his club, London Dynamo. What a ridiculously high price to pay for such a small error of judgement.

Steve Milne, email

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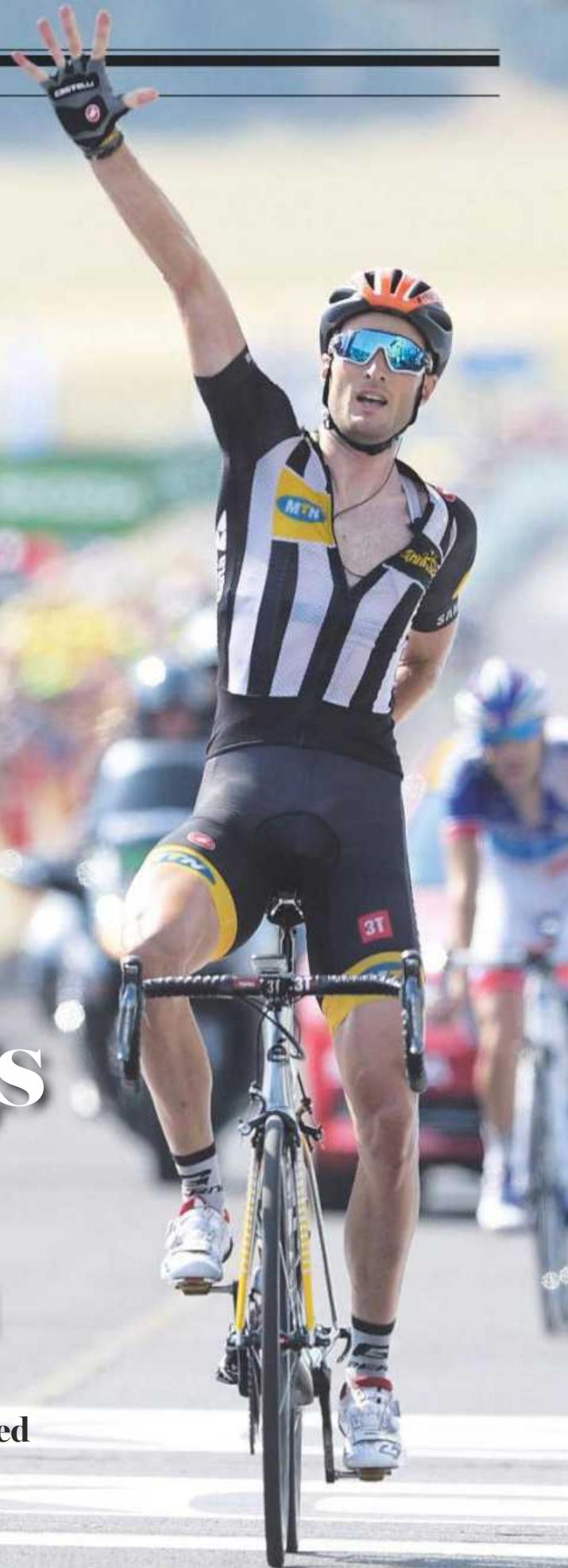


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Cummings is living the dream

Britain's Steve Cummings tells *Cycling Weekly* how his life has changed since his Tour de France stage win





A masterful ride saw Cummings take his maiden Tour stage win

Kenny Pryde

Every rider who starts the Tour de France has a secret fantasy. Chances are they won't admit it, but the fact is they all dream of winning a stage. Even those riding in a support role hope that circumstances will conspire to enable them to win a stage and write themselves into the record books.

A win at the Tour can define a rider's career. Now imagine how much bigger a deal it would be for a rider from the first African-registered team to win the team's first Tour de France stage and — the cherry on the cake — to win the stage on Nelson Mandela Day? If MTN-Qhubeka was going to win a stage in its first Tour participation, that would be the one to take. But what were the odds?

Speaking to *CW* in November, remembering that famous win in Mende on July 18, Steve Cummings smiles ruefully. "I'm trying to forget about it really."

What?

"Yeah, I'm trying to forget about it, but people keep asking me about it," Cummings continues, laughing quietly. "For me there's a bit of, 'Right, done that, let's get on with it.' The problem was — or is — that it was such a boyhood dream of mine to win a stage of the Tour like that, from a breakaway, just like that. So for years, when I've been training, I've always had that idea of winning a stage like that, thinking about it, almost planning it and now... now I've done it. For sure you'd like to do it again, but that would be a different feeling. Maybe I still need more time to be able to look back and enjoy it."

Boyhood dreams

That Cummings used his boyhood Tour stage 'dream' to motivate him throughout his career can't be a huge surprise — even if the reality of doing it sounds like it has had an unexpected effect — but now he's looking for something to replace it. "Maybe I'll wake up one day and it'll be like a lightbulb coming on and I'll go, 'Right! That's it! That's what I'm going to do next!' and I've had a few ideas. Of course there are plenty of races out there I'd like to win, but it needs to happen naturally, something that comes to you and really inspires you. It needs to be something that's a challenge that you really believe you can achieve, something you can do. It maybe

sounds a bit crazy. That's it, though, I'm not going to be going for GC or anything like that."

Cummings actually rates his ride in Tirreno-Adriatico this year as one of the very best of his career. "I finished sixth overall, just a few seconds [nine seconds] off the podium and when you look at the guys around me, it was the top GC guys in form. And there was that snowy finish at the summit of the Terminillo as well. Nobody talks about that one though."

Key link

Cummings's forgotten ride in Italy in March illustrates a modern phenomenon. As is invariably the case in so many facets of cycling life, the Tour de France obliterates everything else that happens all season. If you or your team fail at the Tour, the perception is that your season has been a letdown. For Cummings the Tour win was a nice line to add to an already decent palmarès and justification of his move in the winter of 2014, from BMC to MTN-Qhubeka.

"A lot of the reason for me changing teams was opportunity or about being given opportunities here," he says. "In other teams, there's always somebody ahead of you, someone bigger or better than you so you are always left doing a supporting role or left without a structured programme and you end up riding races to fill in gaps in the team left by other people who've got sick or whatever."

"Also, the way budgets have gone, there are different expectations of you and of teams and here, at MTN, a stage win in a Grand Tour is fantastic, but on other teams, perhaps the aim and expectation is to win the whole race, the GC and that obviously changes the way the team races."

For all his experience, Cummings was not hired at MTN primarily as a mentor to other riders on the team. "I'm not really a big talking guy," he chuckles. "Obviously if I can help or advise the guys I do that and I think they all know they can come and talk to me, or if they want something I'll try and help them, but

I wouldn't say it's my main role here."

During the Tour and the Vuelta, both of which he rode with some Grand Tour rookies, Cummings remembered his first three-week national tour — the 2007 Giro d'Italia which he rode with Discovery Channel at the age of 26.

"Looking back now I remember it just seemed like a big adventure, because I had no idea what I was doing, what was coming up. I was just delighted to be there really and I only got short notice, I didn't know that I was going to be doing it. It was a weird one all round really because we were meant to be riding for [Ivan] Basso, but then he wasn't allowed to start, which changed the dynamics of the team and we went with Popo [Yaroslav Popovych] as the leader and then Popo crashed out so then it was a bit strange and we ended up just going for stages. I guess in a way that was an ideal first Grand Tour for me because you were left quite free to do what you wanted."

Change brings opportunities

For all that he was thrown in at the deep end, he was sharing a room with experienced Australian Matt White (now a sports director at Orica-GreenEdge) who was a reassuring presence. "A lot of the guys on the team were experienced," Cummings says. "They were all older

than me, guys like Pavel Padrnos, George Hincapie started, Chechu [Rubiera] was there and they all tried to help me. Looking back though, it wasn't so much what people were telling me to do or anything, it was more about me watching what was going on around me in the peloton and just trying to do what



A can-do attitude has served Cummings well

they did. I think that's ultimately the way you learn."

Looking back with a little bit of rose tint, riding a Grand Tour with no pressure, aiming to 'get round', try to get in a break and see what happens seems like as good as it's going to get. Cycling has changed in so many ways since 2007 and a far more professional approach pervades the peloton in terms of organisation, team structure, tactics and clarity of planning. Tour teams are almost uniquely organised around their strongest single riders — general classification men or sprinters — there's not a lot of room these days for teams who fancy having a go on multiple fronts. You're a 'GC team' or a 'sprinter's team' or a small-budget squad with an opportunist eye, a team like MTN-Qhubeka was in 2015.



“It’s not like we race blind and go sprinting off up the road — we race aggressively, but not stupidly”

Not that the team ever raced like headless chickens, not in the 2014 Vuelta or at any point in 2015. “I think that we’re really trying to make the best of the opportunities,” Cummings says. “Serge [Pauwels] is a good example in the Tour. No one would have picked him to finish 13th on GC and that came about by being aggressive and getting in breakaways. And we did really well in the team classification too; at one point

we were sitting second and that came about by getting guys in the right breaks and racing from the front, so it’s not like we race blind and go sprinting off up the road; we like to race aggressively, on the front foot, but not stupidly.

“If you look at other teams, they seem happy to hold their position in the peloton and stay put. I understand that if you have one of the best GC riders then it makes sense to do that, it’s the best strategy, but if you don’t have that rider, then you need to race differently.”

Cummings, with his 10 years of road pro experience, has ‘race sense’ that only really comes with seasons of racing, even if the team’s directors try to drill the day’s tactics into the riders’ heads. “Alex [Sans Vega] and the others will outline what they want to be done in the course of the stage,” explains Cummings, “but,

Here comes Cav

When Steve Cummings signed his two-year deal with MTN — soon to be Dimension Data-Qhubeka — there were no real big hitters on the team. Edvald Boasson Hagen added some flash to the roster, but there’s no doubt that the arrival of Mark Cavendish at the team for 2016 will change both the dynamic and media profile of the squad.

“Well, yes, Cav is a bit of a character, so it’s going to be interesting,” smiles Cummings in an uncharacteristically diplomatic response.

“You know, we’re going to have to wait and see what Cav is going to come out with in terms of his goals and plans. I think at the moment it’s pretty much up in the air. I’m not avoiding the question here, I just genuinely don’t know yet. I think it’s going to give us an extra string to our bow, that’s certain, and it can only be good for the team and it will change the dynamic of how we ride on some stages.

“Personally, my memories of Cav are good. One of the best days I ever had on the bike was when Cav won the Worlds in Copenhagen [in 2011]. Being in a team that can deliver him into a position where he can win — and he wins — that’s a really, really nice feeling. There are so many positives to a guy like Cav joining the team.”

you know, when you are trying to get in a breakaway or when you make it into the break, it’s down to you, it’s down to the rider to interpret the feel of the race and work out the best way to do it.

The DS can have a plan, but they can’t tell you what the right move is, they can’t tell you when to attack and when to follow, that has to come from within the rider. For less experienced riders, reminding them to be careful of this or that point on the stage is useful, but for more experienced riders, you can feel it yourself.”

Proud palmarès

Without forgetting his gold medal-laden track career, Cummings’s more recent road focus has seen him win stages in the Vuelta (2012) and the Tour as well as the general classification of the 2014 Tour of the Mediterranean, the Coppa ►

2015 LE TOUR DE FRANCE OFFICIAL HIGHLIGHTS DVD

Chris Froome, history maker. At 7.37pm on July 26 2015, the Team Sky rider became the first British cyclist to win the Tour de France for a second time.

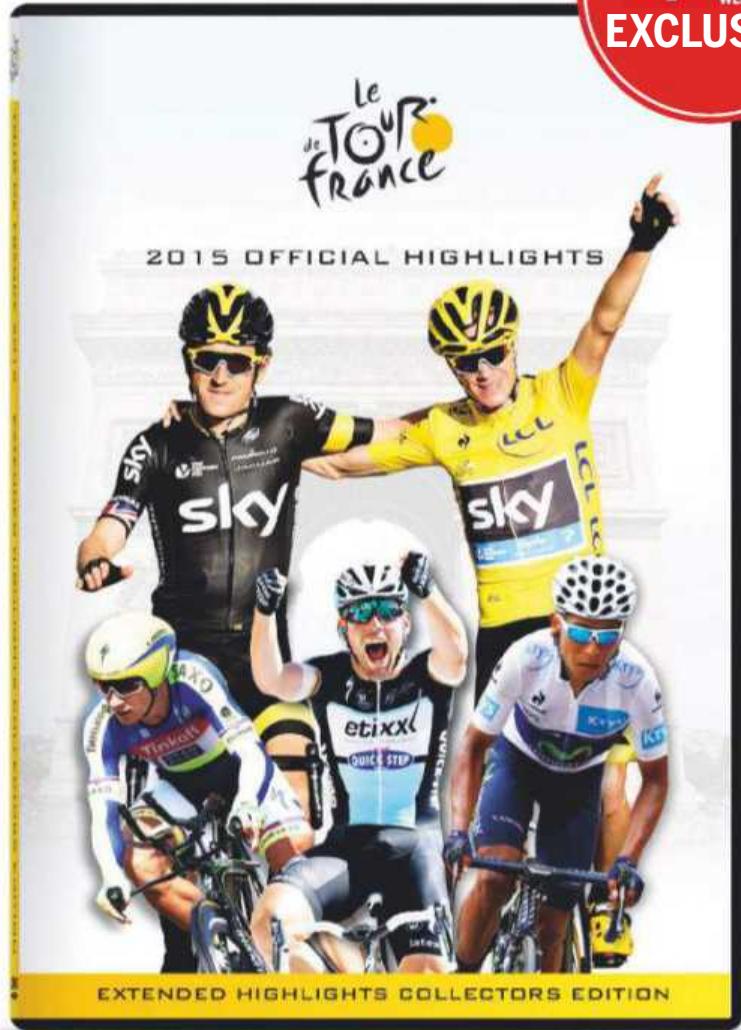
His victory came after three weeks in which he was attacked from all angles: not just by the sport's biggest names on the gruelling terrain that separated Utrecht from Paris, but also a number of journalists and a handful of hostile spectators.

And while illness slowed him down in the Alps, a brilliant first week performance gave Froome the foundation that allowed him to wear the famed *maillot jaune* on the Champs-Elysées for the second time in three years.

It wasn't the only jersey Froome won – he became only the second Briton to claim the King of the Mountains title – and nor was the race solely about him.

Teammate Geraint Thomas emerged as a Grand Tour leader in his own right, with only the fatigue from his domestique duties denying him a place in the top five.

Colombian Nairo Quintana illuminated the final week in his ultimately unsuccessful quest to topple Froome, while the likes of the Wirral's Steve Cummings and French duo Romain Bardet and Thibaut Pinot produced stage-winning performances that will live long in the memory.



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Cummings's 2015 season got off to a flyer in Majorca

Bernocchi one-day in Italy and a nice little morale-booster in the Majorcan Trofeo Andratx-Mirador d'Es Colomer, outclimbing Alejandro Valverde to secure his first win for MTN-Qhubeka in 2015. There have been stage race podiums too, along the way. In short, Cummings has a palmarès that would be the envy of many pro riders. So why has he got such a low profile?

Cummings laughs. "I dunno! You're the journalist, you tell me! I'm joking, but really, I don't know and to be honest it's not something I think about. I don't go around saying stuff and I'm not on Team Sky now. I just do my job and that's it. I guess that there's always bigger, better things than me, guys like Wiggins and Froome. In the end I don't race my bike to have a big media profile, I race my bike to get results and fulfil my dreams"

"I don't race my bike to have a big media profile, I race my bike to get results and fulfil my dreams"

that I've had since I was young. And I'm slowly doing that."

Given his attitude, perhaps Cummings is the ideal man for the African team, whose driving ambition goes beyond ensuring that its sponsors get a good return on their investment, though that also features in the team's plans. The point though, is that Qhubeka has a prominent place on the team's jersey and the team, effectively, gives the non-profit

organisation a prominent slice of 'real estate'. In the end, when the flag drops, it's just another team though, isn't it?

Reaping the rewards

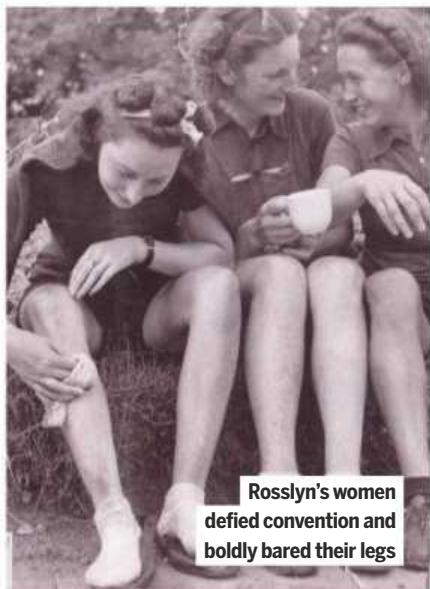
There's barely a pause as Cummings considers his reply. "Well, the team is just special; it is different. It really strikes you when you go to South Africa and visit one of the townships, which I did last year, in Cape Town. To see the way Qhubeka works, to try to help people, not just give them something, but give them a hand up, like a reward — though that's not quite the right word. That's an idea I like, a reward for work and in some ways it doesn't really matter where you are or what you do, you don't get anything for free in life and if you work for it, work to try to achieve your dream, well, yeah, I like that."



A club meet
in the 1920s

The suffragette cyclists

In the saddle since 1922, the Rosslyn Ladies pioneered competitive women's racing, and are still going strong today



Rosslyn's women defied convention and boldly bared their legs





Sophie Hurcom

It's a sunny Sunday morning, there's a slight breeze and it's neither too hot nor cold — perfect conditions to be cycling on a club run. In Ugley, Essex, one club is meeting for their regular get-together, but rather than lightweight, carbon frames lined up against the wall outside the restaurant where the members meet, there's a trio of steel, retro steeds: a yellow Bates, a white Condor, and a blue Ephgrave.

They belong to the Rosslyn Ladies Cycling Club, one of the UK's first female-only clubs, established in 1922. At the time, women were not welcome at men's clubs, so a bold group of female cyclists in Essex founded their own; the Rosslyn was born.

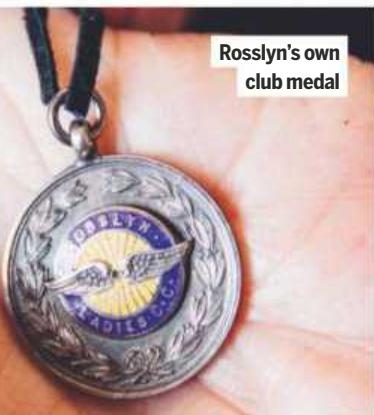
As well as giving women a place to ride socially, the Rosslyn Ladies were pioneers for women's racing in the UK. In 1924, the club promoted its first event, a 12-hour time trial, which made headlines four years later when it was turned into an open road event — the first of its kind for women. They paved the way for women racing on the track too, and promoted the first women's track race at Herne Hill in 1927.

Today, most of the women in the club don't ride a huge distance — most are aged 65 and over — but the 23 members meet once a month to reminisce, catch up and keep the spirit of the Rosslyn alive. On the day *Cycling Weekly* visits, the club is having its birthday lunch.

Pat Seeger, club president, joined Rosslyn in 1946 aged just 20. She still has the bike her husband bought her in 1950, the yellow, fixed wheel Bates she used to race on, handmade from Reynolds 531 steel tubing. Seeger is wearing a long-sleeved black top and matching leggings that the Rosslyn Ladies used to wear to race, with original cleated shoes.

"I had been riding a bit with my husband's club. I left that because there were no girls who raced in it," she says. "He was always reading about the Rosslyn... I lived in Highgate, London, so I used to ride across to east London."

Seeger describes her eventful debut outing with the club.



"On the very first run I went with them, it was lovely. There used to be about 20 out, all in twos."

"There were some youths coming [in the other direction] and they were saying very foul things. We all halted, Nellie [Cook] our secretary got off and she walked round and said, 'wash your mouth out with soap', [it was] very impressive. We were all laughing. I thought, this is a bit of all right."

Whereas today the sight of a woman on a bike is commonplace, in the era between the World Wars, when the suffragist movement was still fighting for women to have the vote and equal rights, a group of women riding bikes, let alone taking part in club runs and racing, was far from the norm. In the early days of the club, members often had to contend with abuse.

Withstanding abuse

"It was greatly disapproved of," says Seeger. "Nellie told me that, sometimes when riding back into London, [men] used to throw stones at them and things like that. I think it was especially [because they were] wearing trousers and that sort of thing."

Iris Beauchamp, whose mother Flo Shamrock was one of the founder members, agrees: "[It was] so different really," she says. "My mother, she had trousers and long socks — you just couldn't show your legs."

However, rather than let this opposition stop them, the Rosslyn continued to make brave and bold

decisions. One of the first club members once wrote: "We were jeered at in our breeches and long coats. We were called fast hussies... gradually the coats got shorter and eventually we

got more daring."

Indeed, as the years passed, the club grew more daring in its wardrobe choices, and soon swapped long trousers for shorts on its club runs and social rides. In fact, it was the shorts by which the Rosslyn Ladies were later identified. We meet two of the women's husbands, who jokingly ask us about the shorts.

"They were very short shorts for ordinary riders," Seeger says. "Maisie, she was a professional machinist,

and she could make us the most marvellous shorts, as short as you like, yet comfortable so they didn't rub on the saddle," says Seeger.

"We had all colours: I had some black and white checked ones, but also red and blue. We wore colourful jumpers or summer tops when it was hot."

Early success

The club's racing calibre rose rapidly in those early years, such was the ascendancy of women's racing, and as word spread its membership swelled from 15 up to more than 50. The club held its own series, the Rosslyn Trophy, in which riders competed over 25, 50 and 100 miles, and in a 12-hour time trial. Then in 1934 the club set the RTTC 12-hour time trial team competition record with a distance of 594.75 miles. More records followed (see box) into the 1960s.

Seeger was one of the Rosslyn's most prolific time triallists and was part of the squad that set records in the 100 and 30-mile TTs. "I started racing and got in with the faster girls, and eventually I finished up in the team," she recalls. "We had a great lot of successes."

"It was a very fast team," says June Grant, the club's captain and a member of Rosslyn for 62 years.

Seeger is modest about her individual times. "My best 10 was about 27-50, not all that fast," she says.

"That was pretty fast!" Grant interjects. "Bikes were different in those days."

"The top competition record time was about 25-50-something," Seeger explains.

"At 25 [miles], my best was a 1-08-02, then again the top record was around 1-06, and my best 100 was four hours and 52 minutes, the record time then was



Records proudly remembered



Members June, Maisie and Jo



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At the club 10 in 1971



Recalling those glory days

Rosslyn CC national competition records:

10-miles	S. Bowers	25-00	1960
10-miles team	J Bowers, P Pepper, H. White	1-19-07	1960
15-miles	S. Bowers	37-56	1960
25-miles team	J. Tregonning, D. Hobbs, K. Mousdale	3-31-52	1947
30 miles team	I. Tregonning, K. Mousdale, P. Seeger	4-20-35	1947
50-miles team	J. Tregonning, D. Hobbs, K. Mousdale	7-13-57	1947
100-miles	J. Tregonning	5-00-16	1947
100-miles team	P. Seeger, J. Tregonning, K. Mousdale	14-52-57	1950
12-hour team	T.M. Biggs, M. Morris, K. Westerley	594.75	1934



Seeger contesting a 12-hour race in 1950



Beaming Seeger models the club's original style



Leafing through the club albums

Race transport

In the heyday of the Rosslyn Ladies, no one had cars to take themselves to and from races. Instead, the riders had to cycle to race HQ — which was often on the other side of the country — or they had to use their initiative to save their energy for the race.

"We used to get on the back of a lorry," explains

Seeger. "I lived in Highgate [London], and quite often it was up in Yorkshire when we went to an event, or Birmingham.

"They were open-backed [trucks]. It was quite nice; we'd have our lunch with us. On a good day, we'd just lie back with our capes for pillows and eat cherries, and they would drop us off as near as possible to our digs, even if it meant coming off the main road.

We'd give them half a crown, two and sixpence.

"We'd do our event, 25 or 50, not too long a distance because the main event was riding home."

The women would again use lorries on the return journey, but this time ride behind them.

"Jo, a good sprinter, would spot a lorry, hang on to it and get in the draft of it, and we'd all try to get on behind Jo."

about four hours and 37 minutes, which I think was set by Eileen Sheridan [in 1950] — she was a marvellous rider. She rang me up this week; we keep in touch, she's 93 now!"

Unlike today when riders follow strict nutrition strategies to fuel themselves over long-distance time trials, in the Fifties there were no energy gels to stock up on. Rather, when racing a 100-mile or 12-hour TT, riders had to stop mid-ride to visit feed stations where they'd find bananas, porridge and even rice pudding. This didn't always end well.

"Other than the drink stops, where we got drinks, sponges, I couldn't [eat anything]," Seeger says. "The first 12 I rode, Nellie our president was looking after me. She said there's a food stop, and I was following the instructions and I got off. They had this very nice rice pudding. But when I got on again after, I thought, 'I don't think I should have had that pudding' — I thought it had gone in my legs.

"I never did eat after I'd had that experience. Josie [another Rosslyn member] would have a big piece of cheese. I never felt hungry really, I was too strung up."

Similarly, the club's racing uniform in the Fifties and Sixties couldn't have been more different to today's. Like many pro riders in the modern peloton, the Rosslyn Ladies wore black kit, except it was nothing like modern skin-tight Lycra with aero credentials. Rather, the women were covered in long-sleeved black tops

and long leggings, with a black cape available if it rained.

"I love all the clothing now," says Seeger, who used to dye her clothes black to race in. "Our tights, if they got wet at the back, all sagged — horrible. You used to stand up on the pedals, and I always rode fixed wheel, so you're doing this [mimes pulling leggings up] all the time trying to pull them up because the weight of the wetness just pulled them down!"

"Jolly uncomfortable in the long-distance events!"

Camp Rosslyn

Life in the club was about more than just racing. A clubhouse was established in Ugley on the A11 time trial course, known as 'camp' where the members would stay most weekends when they were racing or marshalling at events.

"If people weren't racing, they would be up there helping out," recalls Seeger. "I never remember [there being fewer] than about 10 [in attendance]. It was a wonderful time."

After World War II, attitudes towards women changed, and Rosslyn members' relations with their

male counterparts were much more respectful. "After the war, it did seem to click, in that we could do all these things," says Seeger.

"[The reaction from men] was positive. It was quite unusual to see all girls riding along together," agrees Beauchamp. "[Men] appreciated the fact you were a

"Attitudes changed after WWII. Men grew more respectful of women cyclists"

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HOY

cycling ladies club and that was that, and they had respect for you all."

Part of the Rosslyn's lasting legacy has clearly been the close relationships between its members, and the fact that for many it was more than just a cycling club; it was a way of life.

Many of the members had mothers who were in the club before them, or daughters who joined after, while a lot of them married men who were members of other cycling clubs.

Beauchamp was from a particularly cycling-crazy family. As well as her mother being a founding Rosslyn member, her father was Dave Marsh, amateur world champion in 1922 who also competed in the road race for GB at the 1924 and 1928 Olympics; her husband is former time triallist Eric Beauchamp, while both her brothers were cyclists and her granddaughter is also a member of the Rosslyn.

"We used to cycle everywhere with the club," recalls Beauchamp. "We went at Easter to the Isle of Wight; we cycled all the way. We've been over to the Isle of Man for the racing; we cycled over to Liverpool," recalls Beauchamp.

The Isle of Wight trip became an annual event that the Rosslyn went on with other clubs. "We would meet in London and cycle to Portsmouth," says Grant. "Loads of clubs would go, the boat would be filled with bikes."

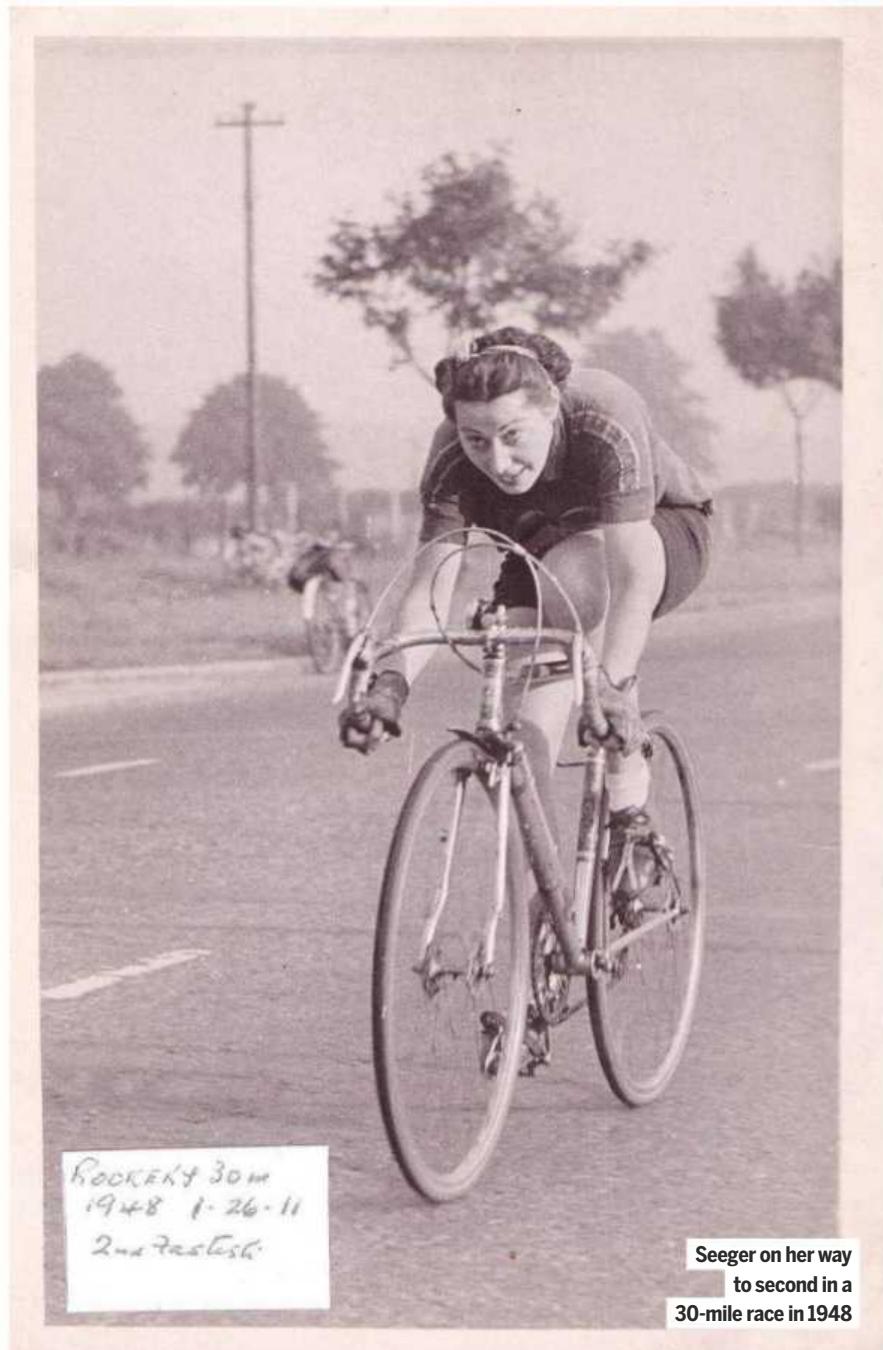
Motherhood no barrier

After Seeger's son Tony was born, she continued to train, with him attached to her bike in a sidecar. "It was lovely. It was like a little pram; he was so comfortable," she says. "It was like a little hammock. He wasn't banging on the bottom; it was lined inside with nice padding."

Beauchamp similarly took her son along with her bike. "We had a tandem with a sidecar, and we cycled all the way from Marlow, where we lived, all the way down to Bournemouth for a holiday," she says. "He fell asleep, it was lovely. We just went everywhere on a bike."

Today, almost a century since the club first formed, its spirit is still thriving, and with no shortage of fond reminiscing. "They were wonderful, wonderful times in the Rosslyn," says Grant. "It was lovely, the camaraderie and the memories as well."

"You knew the Rosslyn," says Beauchamp, "Everybody knew them." ■



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Should you dress to compress?

If recovery is essential to better training, shouldn't we all be wearing compression socks after a hard session, asks *Stuart Clapp*

Train hard, recover and go again. We've seen the photos of the pros post-race in their compression clothing, but is this gear worth investing in for our own recovery after a hard day in the saddle?

After all, we're hardly doing three-week stage races where recovery needs to happen, quite literally, overnight. That said, it still might well be worth while stepping into some support stockings if this provides an easy-to-implement boost to recovery.

The thinking behind the theory

Doctors prescribe compression wear for bedbound patients or people with lymphatic problems. The hosiery increases pressure and accelerates blood flow to the heart, heightening the venous system, and shifting the toxins from the legs to the lymph glands quicker where they're absorbed by the body, similar to the effects of massage.

So how does compression wear work for cyclists? If it increases circulation, the theory is that it should speed up the body's repair of sore, damaged muscles.

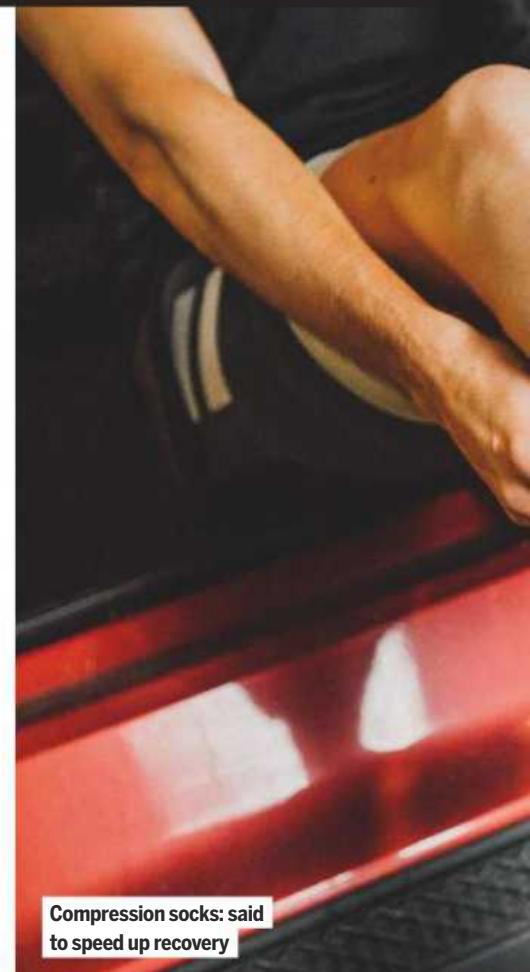
But does it? Compression will help to combat cramp post-exercise, but little has been proven independently to suggest that it accelerates recovery.

A brand's perspective

CEP Compression is one of the leading brands in the category and supplies teams such as Velosure-Primal as well as a number of individual endurance athletes. The company is owned by Medi, a German firm that has been in the business for over 60 years. It's widely regarded as a global leader in phlebology, the science concerned with venous defects.

"While riding a bike, the benefits are limited; it's a linear movement where the rider doesn't lose their shape, whereas if an athlete is running, the movement is far more dynamic. Compression limits muscle oscillation and helps to prevent injury, but the benefit for cyclists is found primarily in their recovery," says Matt Davey, UK sales manager for CEP Compression.

The idea of compression being used to enhance performance on the bike has



Compression socks: said to speed up recovery

been scrutinised. The UCI seems to think there is a benefit to be had from wearing compression wear in competition, as in 2012 they imposed a ban on it and stated that sock length must be no higher than the mid-point of the ankle and the knee. Whether this is because of the benefit of compression itself or because compression garments could offer aerodynamic advantages is unclear.

Yes



Russell Hampton

(Cyclist at Team PolyPipe and coach at Marginal Gains Cycling)

"Compression clothing has always been vital to my performance. I've been using it for 10 years now. I find that once I've used compression socks, either travelling or recovering overnight, my legs feel less bloated and stiff, which means I can perform better day after day."

No



Zoe Chapman

(Sports massage therapist, Unique Massage)

"A manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) massage has proven to be more beneficial than compression wear. The reason behind this is compression can close lymph vessels, which are found just below the skin, and decreases the amount of toxins able to escape from the area. MLD is a light massage that pushes the waste toxins towards the lymph nodes."



"All compression isn't the same. To sum up the whole category would be like riding on one tyre and judging them all by that standard. Using good compression wear will speed up recovery. If a cyclist has spent thousands of pounds on their bike they're going to want to use it. Compression helps that. It helps them to recover faster and use their bike more frequently. And more training means fitter and faster," adds Davey.

Is it all in the mind?

With no concrete proof either way, perhaps it's not unfair to suggest that the benefit can be found psychologically as much as it can be found physiologically. Either way, if wearing compression socks encourages the former — a better mindset — going into an event or training session, then what's the harm?

OUR TAKE

As Matt Davey says, the benefit of compression is limited while riding, but with more pro teams decking out their riders in compression socks following a hard race, they're bound to grow in popularity. After all, we choked at recovery shakes, avoided aero helmets and tittered at Team Sky's warm-down, but those innovations all caught on regardless. Recovery socks look likely to be next.

HOT STUFF

Lightweight Autobahn Disc

The ultimate disc wheel? Considering it retails for £2,450, weighs just 780g and the pros use it even when not sponsored, it might be. We want to see what all the

fuss is about, but we need to find a time trial to test it.

Contact:

www.light-weight.info

Price:

£2,450

Test

report: February

Stages power meter

With updated plastics to help stop leakage and splits around the seals, as well as a firmware spruce up, we should have a more reliable time riding with Stages power. They've also chopped off around £100 too.

Contact: www.saddleback.co.uk

Price: £599 Test report: January



Vittoria Corsa Speed tyre

Vittoria claims its first tubeless-ready road tyre is the fastest on the market, while also being the lightest tubeless tyre and offering impressive puncture resistance. It has a cotton casing and the tread uses the company's latest G+ Isotech compound.

Contact: www.chickencycles.co.uk

Price:

£TBC Test

report:

Decem-

ber





7

Prologo Winter gloves £79.99

For riding in wet weather, the Prologo Winter gloves are hard to beat. The palms have the same CPC technology as used on the company's saddles, which mean faultless grip. The outers are water-resistant too. However, given that these are some of the most expensive gloves on the market, I would have liked them to be warmer. There's a cover that is attached at the wrist and allows you to convert to 'lobster fingers', which adds a little more warmth, but there's still very little in the way of insulation — on the coldest days, you'll want something thicker. *Henry Robertshaw 80g www.i-ride.co.uk*



Even in 'lobster' form, warmth is lacking

Ritchey WCS MonoCurve integrated handlebar and stem £415

An integrated bar and stem is a great addition to anyone's bike if you want it to look super-sleek, though with no adjustment in length or tilt, you really need to get the purchase right first time. Ritchey's WCS offering will no doubt look great and will be a performance upgrade too. Weight is low at 353g (claimed) for a 42cm width and 120mm stem, and stiffness isn't an issue, with little flex from the carbon cockpit. I found these to be very comfortable in the hood, drop and top position thanks to the MonoCurve design. The big letdown, though, are the very soft stem bolts — you have to be very careful when fitting them. *Symon Lewis 353g www.paligap.cc*



6

Topeak Tool Monster Air £67.99

The Tool Monster has pretty much everything you'll ever need to keep yourself going on the road, all wrapped up in a package that is super-chunky and eschews the conventional Swiss Army Knife design. Packed away in its two pieces are eight different Allen keys, two Torx bits, three spanner heads, two spoke wrenches, a crosshead screwdriver and a chain-breaker. It's designed so that you can get an extra-large handhold to free those pesky frozen bolts. The whole lot is held together by a non-catching, Velcro-like cuff and it's topped off with a CO2 inflator. It's a weighty and expensive beast, so although it replaces a whole plethora of separate bits of kit, it's not one for the weight weenie or the budget-conscious.

Paul Norman 160g www.extrauk.co.uk

7



VeloToze Short overshoes £13

Made from a material akin to a thick rubber balloon, VeloToze say the Short overshoes are waterproof, windproof and aerodynamic. The overshoes come up to just above the ankle and are straightforward to get on – you simply stretch them over your shoes. There are no zips or velcro straps and the flexible material gives a snug fit. They kept my feet dry, save for the cuff of my socks (Tall version costs an extra £2), and acted as an effective barrier to the wind. On the coldest days, a thicker option will be required, and for warmer days you'll want better ventilation. They're good for racing but if used regularly you'd want a more robust option. *Christopher Hovenden 64g*

www.velobrands.co.uk

7



Castelli Neoprene Toe Thingy £15

Product of the week
Toe covers are hugely handy to keep the chill off your piggies or to press on through spray or rain. The uni-sized 'Toe Thingy' from Castelli is very good at insulating and weatherproofing thanks to the neoprene fabric. Fit is perfect and they are easy to pull on or off. During the last few months of testing, they've not torn or worn despite a fair bit of walking. At £15 they're not too costly either. Shame they can't be used all winter.

Symon Lewis 52g

www.saddleback.co.uk

10

Specialized Elite Road shoes £100

The Elite Road is the next model up from the entry-level Sport shoe. Being higher-spec, it features a ratchet closure system in place of the three Velcro straps on the cheaper shoe. Specialized describes the shoe as being suitable for your daily commute, a demanding sportive, or an epic Fondo. I would agree, but I see no reason why you couldn't race in these shoes. While not as stiff as the carbon-soled S-Works shoe, I found them more comfortable, thanks to their having slightly more room in the toe-box area. The sole is luminous green and offers some visibility. Overall, comfort and quality is excellent; my only gripe is that the RRP could be a touch lower.

Oliver Bridgewood 288g (claimed)

www.specialized.com/uk



8

Chapeau Merino neck-warmer £19.99

I've been keeping draughts out of the neckline of looser-fitting jackets with this neck-warmer from Chapeau. It's made of soft merino wool, so it's comfortable to wear, and isn't itchy. It's warm too, doing its job really well on early mornings, and it's long and stretchy enough that it will fill the gap between your chin and your jacket without sagging. Being quite lightly woven, it's also easy to roll up and stuff in a back pocket. I like the stylish deep blue and pink colours, which look smart with most outfits. But be careful when washing it, as merino likes to be treated gently. *Paul Norman 37g*

www.chapeau.cc



8

LONG-TERM TEST

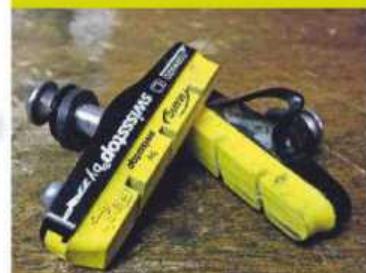
8 months later

SwissStop FlashPro Yellow King brake pads £39.99

These have been on my race bike all season, performing well regardless of the wheel brand, in both wet and dry conditions. Such is their versatility that they are also work well with aluminium rims too, so you won't need to swap them out. SL

www.extrauk.co.uk

9



Pads for all wheel types

Can't live without

Hope Mavic Open Pro Mono RS wheelset £380

If you're after a robust wheelset that can take you through the whole year without a worry, look no further than these virtually indestructible Hope Mono RS hubs built on Mavic Open Pro rims. They've survived the worst of conditions and still run smooth after years of abuse. SL

www.hopetech.com



Mavic/Hope alliance has proved super-strong

Specialized Amira SL4 Comp £2,000

Tested by: Hannah Bussey | Miles ridden: 254 | Size tested: 54cm | Weight: 8.38kg/18.47lb

It's been a while since we last saw the Amira. Four years to be precise. In fact, it was also the year it was officially launched after its 2010 race debut. We were impressed with the work Specialized had committed to engineering a

truly women-specific bike. It's since gone on to prove its pedigree, winning this year's World Championships under Lizzie Armitstead, along with several other notable races with the rest of the Boels-Dolmans squad. But, understandably, that's with range-topping machines, so we've got hold of the £2k Comp version (one up from entry level) to see how it performs.

Frame

At the time the Amira was launched, bikes with the women-specific label were generally of the 'pink it and shrink it' variety, so a frameset that not only had its own carbon lay-up mould, but that was also constructed under new threshold tests which took into account differences in size and power outputs, was revolutionary. With a few years under its belt, design tweaks have been made and due to true trickle-down technology the Fact9r Carbon Comp now matches the upper reaches of the Amira peloton with its SL4 frameset.

Specialized says the small stack and reach, when compared to other (non-women-specific) race bike geometry, enables a woman's pelvis to sit in its more natural position. If nothing else this does away with a potential pile of spacers that are



required if you do need to lift the stem and bars — which makes for an incredibly stiff front end. This, along with a low bottom bracket, long wheelbase, and shorter top tube than an equivalent-sized traditional frameset, is the basis for a chassis to keep you firmly planted on the tarmac.

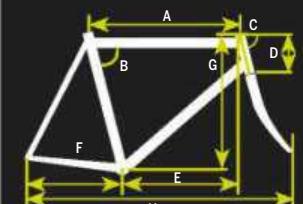
Specification

The alloy women-specific bars are spot on, with a compact and shallow drop.

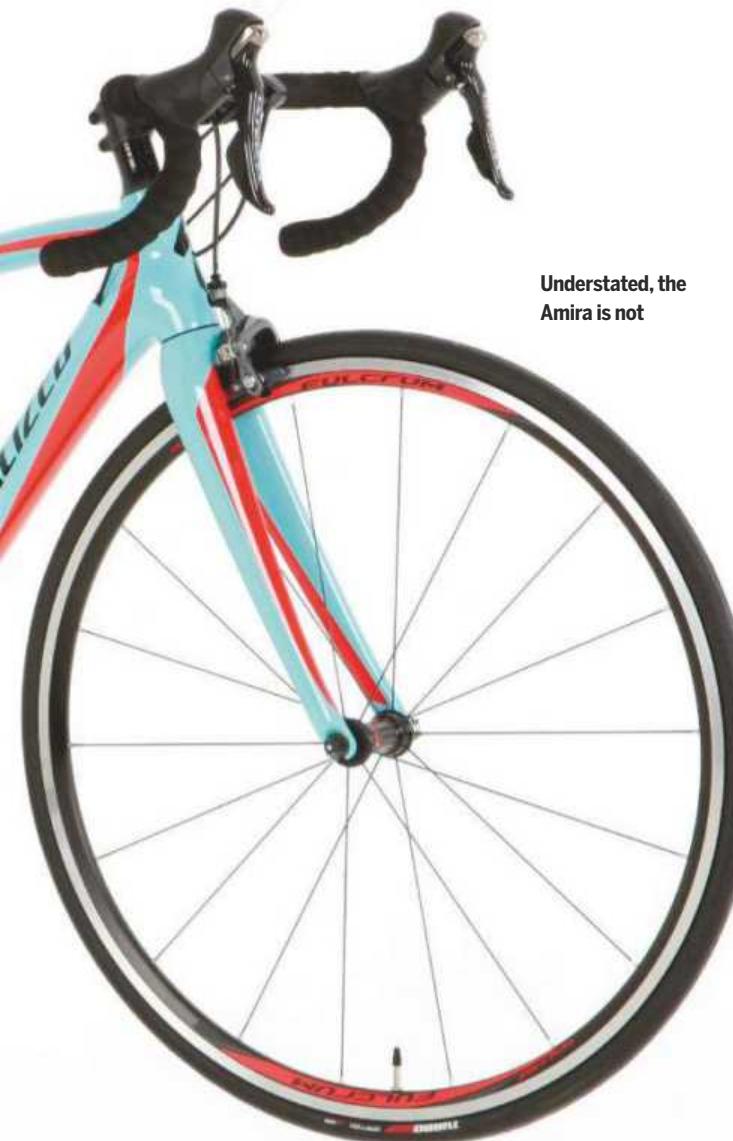
All but the chainset is trusty Shimano Ultegra 6800, and Praxis Works is more than up to the job so it's mainly a visual let-down. At the £2k price mark some compromises have been made and I'm glad it wasn't at the expense of the Ultegra brakes. The gear ratios are on the large side though, with a few crossover duplications and key sprocket gaps. The most likely post-purchase upgrade would be to replace the Fulcrum Racing S4

Specialized Amira SL4 Comp £2,000

Frame	███████████	8/10
Specification	███████████	8/10
Ride	███████████	8/10
Value	███████████	8/10
Distributor	www.specialized.com	
Frame	FACT9r Carbon	
Fork	FACT Carbon	
Size range	44, 48, 51, 54, 56cm	
Weight	8.38kg/18.47lb	
Groupset	11s Ultegra/Praxis Works TURN Zayante	
Gear ratios	50/34 11-28t	
Wheels	Fulcrum Racing S4	
Tyres	Specialized Turbo Pro	
Bar	Specialized Women's Comp, shallow drop alloy	
Stem	Specialized Comp Multi Alloy	
Seatpost	Specialized Comp Carbon	
Saddle	Specialized Body Geometry Oura Comp	



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
53.5cm	74°	72°	14.5cm	37.8cm	40.5cm	54.8cm	98.2cm



Understated, the Amira is not



Ultegra brakes offer superb performance



Own brand saddle is women-specific



Praxis chainset is sole deviation from Ultegra

wheel traction when climbing a greasy wet 16 per cent climb.

Value

On paper, many brands offer a higher spec for less money. But in this case, I do think you are genuinely paying for the innovative research and development that is finally

taking women's cycling seriously, even at the lower end of the market. That said, with one more year to run on the current product cycle, I'd be tempted to get hold of a 2015 version, retailing as low as £1,600, as the paintjob is the only difference between that and the 2016 version.

Verdict

At the two grand mark, the Amira is a great buy. It's not going to set the world alight, but if gaining confidence on a bike that fits you properly is more important than joining the weight weenie club then it's an ideal option. However, there are a few upgrades that could shave off a couple of pounds, wheels especially. A pair of rapid, light carbon hoops would probably be a game-changer for the

frameset, but you'd also need to significantly increase your budget.

8

For

- Truly women-specific
- Predictable handling
- Stiff front end

Against

- Not Shimano Ultegra throughout
- Weight
- Gear ratios

wheelset. A lighter, faster set would definitely unleash more of the Amira's potential.

Riding

True to the geometry's word, the ride is confidence inspiring. Despite sizing up, due to being an in-between size, I still felt part of the bike, rather than just perched on it. It's not a particularly light

machine, and at times I did feel this penalty on the climbs, with a distinct lack of ping when out of the saddle. But this was far outweighed by the sure-footed feeling on the descents. Weight distribution feels perfectly balanced, enabling me to load up the front slightly when hitting an unexpected gravel patch on a tight corner, but kept rear

Winter bibtights

James Bracey braves the elements to test five of the best cold-weather bibs

What

The full-length design of winter tights means they will keep your lower legs warm when the temperature drops. Most have a 'bib' that keeps the torso warm too. They are made from a fleece-backed material to trap heat during the cold season. Some incorporate windproof panels and/or water-resistant materials for added protection, as well as stirrups or grippers to stop the tights from riding up. Most have a chamois pad to allow you to wear them on their own without liner shorts. However, some brands produce unpadded tights, allowing you to wear your favourite shorts underneath.

Why

A must-have for any cyclist's wardrobe, quality tights will give years of good service. A well-fitted and comfortable pair is essential when grinding out the long, steady winter miles. Freedom of movement is important, as winter layers can feel quite constrictive.

How

Each set of tights has been worn for varying durations and intensities of rides, whatever the weather. They have been judged on fit, comfort, performance, practicality, style, quality of materials, longevity and any unique features.

HOW WE SCORE

- 10 - Superb, best in its class and we couldn't fault it.
- 9 - Excellent, a slight change and it would be perfect
- 8 - Brilliant, we'd happily buy it
- 7 - Solid, but there's better out there
- 6 - Pretty good, but not quite hitting the mark
- 5 - OK. Not much wrong with it, but nothing special
- 4 - A few niggles let this down
- 3 - Disappointing
- 2 - Poor, approach with caution
- 1 - Terrible, do not buy this product

Lusso Nitelife £79.99

Lusso has always been known as a brand that delivers good value cycling kit, and these Nitelife tights offer some great features. Aimed at riders who commute or ride in the dark, they are made from a very warm, brushed Roubaix fabric which worked well in colder, dry conditions, keeping legs toasty, although rain and spray soaked through the fabric quite quickly, so they may not be the right choice for wet riding. The reflective lower leg fabric lends an old-fashioned plus-fours look that you will either love or hate, but combined with the hip and thigh panels, night-time visibility is outstanding. The H4 pad worked best in a more upright riding position; while leaning forward, the perforations would catch delicate areas, which was very disconcerting and caused me to shift around more than I would have liked. I was impressed with the overall fit of the tights and they allowed for good range of movement without restriction.

Weight
305
grams

Vulpine Hoy £109.99

First impressions of these tights – created in a partnership between Sir Chris Hoy and the well-known British brand Vulpine – are that they're a quite basic winter product. They are made from Roubaix material throughout, including the bib. The tights come up large, so rather than my classic medium, I easily fitted into a small. The articulated cut feels great when on and the thinner Roubaix material is extremely soft. The Cytech long-distance pad felt very comfortable on longer rides, with no movement or excess material. The silicone ankle grippers did a good job of holding the tights in place. I did notice that in colder conditions, in driving rain or biting winds, the material was not the most thermal, so they certainly wouldn't be my first choice in deep winter; a slightly thicker material would help. I did experience some bunching behind my knees on longer, steadier rides, caused by the stretchiness of the fabric.

Weight
263
grams

8

Size: S-XXL
Colour: Black
www.lusso.bike



Bontrager Race Thermal InForm £69.99

This winter offering from Bontrager has thighs, knees and seat area made from Profila Thermal material, which is windproof and offers some water-resistance. The other areas are made from Roubaix-style material to aid heat regulation. The bibs are made of a comfortable mesh material with soft seams.

They fitted well across the shoulders, although the grey material makes the bibs look like they have been washed too much. The Bontragers aren't the most form-fitting tight; despite having decent ankle grippers and zips, the fit around my ankle was quite baggy and unsightly. The windproof material has minimal stretch and quite straight-cut torso panels; riding out of the saddle, the material tended to wrinkle and bunch up, taking the front of the insert with it. Sitting back down involved a lot of readjusting before getting comfortable.

**Weight
288
grams**

6

Size: S-XXL
Colour: Black/grey
www.bontrager.com



Specialized SL Pro £150

The first thing you notice when you put on the SL Pro bibs is that the material stretches — a lot. These are great tights for people with really long legs; they're cut long with very comfortable, long ankle grippers. They are made using two different Roubaix materials for warmth and freedom of movement in the relevant areas. In use, these tights regulated temperature very well, helped by the mesh panels in the torso area. There are no windproof panels but the material has a Teflon coating to bead off water. The SL name refers to Specialized's more race-oriented clothing range, and so naturally these tights are more suited to winter training rides that are fast, rather than steady coffee shop runs. The SL pad was very comfortable but the Teflon coating on the seat area was quite slippery and I constantly had to change my position, since I kept sliding forward on the saddle, which after a while became quite irritating.

**Weight
22780
grams**

7

Size: S-XL
Colour: Black
www.specialized.com



B-Twin Bike 520 £54.99

Despite being the cheapest in the test, the B-Twin includes many of the features found in tights costing three times the price. The construction has been well thought out: the panels at the front are made of a windproof, slightly water-resistant material. The rest is made from stretchy Roubaix material, while the bib has mesh inserts to regulate core temperature. The ankles have zippers and good grippers. The fit is very comfortable and the level of padding is very reasonable; not as thick as some pads designed for longer rides but perfectly adequate for most normal winter rides. It does become evident that the quality of the materials is not as good as some others, as the windproof panels are not as breathable as, for example, the Castelli Nanoflex — I began getting a little sweaty around the thighs and crotch. Reflectivity was good, with big flashes on the thighs. Overall, for colder conditions, the Bike 520 is a great choice.

**Weight
22100
grams**

8

Sizes: S-2XL
Colour: Black/white
www.decathlon.co.uk



FITNESS

How do I... recharge my body & mind?

Indulging in a few extra comfort foods could be the perfect tonic this winter

Paul Knott

Staying healthy off the bike is a prerequisite for optimal performance on it. As winter takes hold, allowing yourself time to mentally unwind can be helped by rewarding yourself with a few culinary treats. Maintaining a nourishing diet plays an important role throughout the season, and eating plenty — including a few treats — during the colder months helps make sure the elements don't get you down and make you ill.

Steffi Berchtold, nutritionist and chef for Pro Continental team Bora-Argon 18 explains how to ensure you stay healthy both physically and mentally throughout the winter.

"The off-season is very important to repair the body completely after a long, debilitating racing season," she says. "The stress of the season, as well as the winter weather conditions makes the body susceptible to many infections.

However, with the right nutrition, a lot can be prevented."

Berchtold recommends both conventional and more unusual food options.

"A balanced, vitamin and nutrient-rich diet provides the body with all immune-enhancing

vitamins, minerals and antioxidants such as vitamin A, C, zinc and selenium. I'd recommend smoothies from different vegetables and fruits such as beetroot, pomegranate, carrot, green leafy vegetables, apple and ginger combined with my secret weapon, moringa, a nutrient-rich plant that is widely used throughout Africa and Asia."

It isn't solely about eating what is right for the body, Berchtold emphasises, but also what is right for the mind: "The off-season allows time for a little 'soul food' — the long-craved-for burger, Mum's Christmas baking, or freshly baked cookies are all like balm for an athlete's soul."

Additional eating can be unusually beneficial for the body in the winter months. Marcel Hesseling, nutritionist for LottoNL-Jumbo, highlights why a little extra winter weight can prove advantageous: "During winter, most cyclists have a very low body weight combined with a low body fat percentage.

After intensive training sessions, there is a realistic chance your body will be in a negative energy balance. This situation arises when your energy intake is lower than the amount your body needs — known to increase the risk of illness."

Essential points

- Eating wisely off the bike is crucial to performing on it
- Natural food is best
- Consuming food that heals the mind is as important as nourishing the body

Feel-good foods may well be good for the mind but this doesn't mean you can have a three-month junk food binge. It is still important to maintain self-restraint — a treat you eat frequently all year round loses its 'treat' status.



Another area of nutrition that should be observed is balancing your acid-base metabolism. High levels of acid within the body can make you more susceptible to infections. Avoiding white flour, dairy products and refined sugars can be very beneficial.

YOU SAY

Hot lemon and ginger every morning.

Mark Weaver

I put a warm drink in my bottle so it takes the edge off that initial cold weather feeling.

*Lizzy Goodband
Felton*

Low-carbohydrate diets may be the current trend in weight loss, but remember carbohydrates are your main source of energy. This is particularly crucial in cold weather when glycogen depletion can be accelerated.

Listen to your body. If you are feeling groggy and the weather isn't great, don't force yourself to train hard regardless. Rest up for another day, as pushing yourself too hard in the winter months could cause more harm than good.

Illnesses are unavoidable sometimes, especially in winter. However, adapting your diet to include zinc can help reduce the symptoms of the illness and get you back to full health sooner.

Supplementing your diet with vitamin D is more beneficial in the winter, when your body sees less sunlight. Vitamin D is needed to keep your immune system ticking over to help prevent illnesses.

Don't coop yourself up indoors with the central heating on and without fresh air.

Ben Goodall

I make up a green vegetable smoothie — the health benefits override over taste!

Sarah Cooper

I take vitamin supplements each morning so I know I'm getting some intake every day.

Thomas Baldwin

Drink plenty of beer to ward off evil spirits.

Kevin Wilkinson

Things to do this week

OTE Whey Protein recovery drink

Getting your post-ride nutrition spot-on is crucial, and the official nutrition partner for LottoNL-Jumbo cycling team, OTE, has created a product to help start the recovery process straight away.



Each 52g sachet contains 25g of protein, which helps to repair muscle fibres after strenuous activity. OTE's tear-off tab opening makes it easy to add to bottles. A soya protein recovery drink is also available, ideal for vegetarians and provides 25g of protein.

£2.25 per sachet
www.otesports.co.uk

Wall sit

The wall sit exercise is an excellent way to build quad and glute strength and can be completed either at work or at home. All you need is a wall.

- Begin standing with your back against a wall. Then gently slide down until your knees form a right angle.
- Hold this 90-degree angle while making sure that your lower back, shoulders and head remain in contact with the wall.
- Spread the weight evenly throughout your feet, as placing too much pressure on your toes can cause injuries to your knees.
- Hold position for one minute and complete four sets. As your strength improves, increase the length of time you hold the position.



Black garlic

We've previously recommended garlic in its traditional form, but this lesser-known variety carries just as many health benefits. Despite its odd appearance, black garlic contains twice the amount of antioxidants found in white garlic, as

well as S-Allyl cysteine, which helps lower cholesterol.

Better still, black garlic is odourless, so won't leave you with stinky breath.





The Great Indoors

Modern tech is making indoor training ever more bearable, but is that a good enough reason for shunning the great outdoors this winter?
Simon Schofield investigates

Conventional wisdom dictates that winter riding is all about riding slowly over long distances on a heavy bike while wrapped up in warm clothing, with a view to developing an aerobic base. This, conventional wisdom has it, will yield major benefits come spring — hence the dictum, winter miles equal summer smiles. However, there's an increasing body of evidence suggesting that tradition, in this instance, is wrong.

Research by the University of Kent, among others, has shown that greater fitness gains can be made with specific, high-intensity training rather than with steady base miles riding. The core message is that you can get fitter and faster by riding shorter and harder rather than longer and slower.

The idea that base training may not be necessary, and the fact that indoor riding is booming thanks to the advent of smart trainers and clever tech raises an interesting question: can we maximise our winter training through indoor interventions? To some, the idea of renouncing the great outdoors is heretical; for these purists, the thought of being confined to the turbo from November to February would be horrifying. But the proponents of training indoors respond by pointing to its benefits: no cold, no rain, no ice, no risk of accidents, no need for a winter bike and bigger fitness gains. What are we to believe?

Indoor training – game-changer

Experienced cyclist and indoor cycling coach Robert Massimo Baldi, 45, is convinced that indoor riding tools such as Zwift will be a “game-changer”. He says: “Zwift, along with other programmes, will hopefully see the death of the off-season myth where people force themselves to do the miles during the worst months for riding in the mistaken belief that they have to do long, steady base training.

“Presuming an established fitness base from summer, indoor cycling can form part of a training plan working on specific elements like FTP and VO2max intervals when it's nicer to be inside and ride miles in the spring when the weather is warming up.”

Club cyclist Chris Parker, 42, agrees: “After spending years training in the dark through the winter on the road and then deciding to commit to a second, middle-aged, spell of racing, with a family in

“We chatted on text, sprinted for signs and generally had an hour's worth of fun”

tow, adopting an indoor training ‘habit’ is about the only way to cut it.

“You cannot simply say, ‘It's wet, I'll skip today because tomorrow will be dry and better suited to a road ride’. You just log in, go through the pain and do your intervals in the garage at a time pre-arranged with the wife.

“And it works... what Zwift has done is added ‘gamification’ to what is essentially a seriously dull habit. Our club even ran a club ride on Zwift. Ten of us who would normally be out in a chaingang on dark roads had some fun, rode as a group, chatted on text, sprinted for signs and sprint segments and generally had an hour's worth of fun. It's definitely the only way to pass the winter in top form and keep the cobwebs well and truly away.”

The great outdoors

Renouncing the great outdoors may seem a huge step, and in truth even the most committed indoor riders will try to get outside to ride at the weekend. The benefits of riding outside in the winter are significant. Bike-handling can be improved by negotiating greasy, wet roads, and that can pay dividends once conditions improve. The camaraderie of a long, steady ride out to a cafe for a chat should not be underestimated — it can be one of the most enjoyable aspects of winter riding.

There's evidence that the feeling of wellbeing we get from being in the open air is beneficial, reducing tension, anger and depression. And finally, don't we spend enough of our time in front of screens? The light emitted from some screens can disrupt our natural rhythms; if we're exposed to it shortly before bedtime, it can affect sleep patterns.

Respected coach Jon Sharples from Trainsharp (trainsharpcyclecoaching.co.uk) advises against replacing all outdoor rides with indoor ones: “Indoor training can never completely replace real world training. There are many advantages to training on the turbo, but if you want to get better at road riding, you have to train on the road at one point

The technology

■ The 800lb gorilla in the tech-driven indoor riding market is Zwift. The programme has been almost a year in open testing phase, but in November it launches as a fully-fledged product with a price of £8 per month. If you have the right equipment, it offers group riding, racing and training, as well as the opportunity to noodle around its virtual environments.

■ Rivals to Zwift come in the form of the longer-established Tacx Multi-Player software which also offers racing and training options in virtual worlds, as does B Kool. While both have their followers, neither seems to have attracted the numbers or community that Zwift has rapidly established.

■ TrainerRoad is a popular software program that appeals to those who are very serious about structured riding in the form of intervals. It lacks the entertainment value of others but is often praised for its training programmes and ease of use.

■ Fulgaz is a video-based programme offering some of the highest-quality videos transporting you all over the world. Its USP is its stunningly accurate recreation of real life gradients, if you're lucky enough to use a smart trainer, which is able to automatically control resistance.

or another. Bike-handling skills, changes in pace and improving your souplesse [grace and style] are all things that can only be completed while actually riding your bike.”

The love of the indoors

Thirty-one-year old trainee GP James Gill is a dedicated indoor rider and concedes that his approach may surprise some: “You can be a proper cyclist even if you only ride indoors.”

Gill suffered a bad injury, crashing on a patch of black ice, and ended up having his elbow rebuilt with pins and rods. His arm was immobilised for weeks and there followed months of intense physiotherapy. He took to the turbo as part of his rehabilitation, and his arm is now fully healed — but he's wary of the roads.

“Going back outside on a bike has been difficult, and I have much reduced confidence. I'm not sure how long it's

going to take to get my confidence back — maybe I never will."

Yet Gill's numbers are enviable. He regularly clocks up 120 miles a week inside and is placing in the top 20 in online races — against a global field, including strong riders. Because riding indoors is so data-driven, he knows exactly what effort he's making and can sustain 4-4.5w/kg over an hour-long race. In the real world, these would be the numbers of a second-cat racer.

"You can race properly inside and you end up pushing yourself faster and further. You get mental as well as physical stimulation. You can see exactly what you're doing on the numbers on the screen and you can see what everybody else is doing. It's very motivating."

"I cannot get as good a workout outside as I do inside. I worry I would

"I cannot get as good a workout outside as I do inside: I worry I'd lose it on a corner"

lose it going round a corner if I'm really going for it."

Gill also points out the benefits of the online community that's grown up around Zwift — he races against regulars from all over the world and has made good friends. His experience is a new take on cycling that won't suit everyone. But he and his fellow enthusiasts maintain that winter need not mean giving up riding fast and hard, even though it's a very different way to do it.

How best to use the pain cave

We fired a few questions at Sharples to find out how best to use the pain cave and the tech training aids now available

Are programmes such as Zwift gimmicks for the easily bored, or can they really contribute to improved fitness over the winter?

Training in this way consistently is going to be much better at improving winter fitness than sporadically training on the road. The main takeaway message: if it works and you like it, and most importantly you use it correctly as part of a structured programme, you're going down the right path.

How can you best integrate these latest tech-based training techniques into a serious training programme over the winter?

Having cool, tech-based training techniques is great, but without a direction or a goal you won't be spending your time very effectively. We sit down with our athletes and assess their strengths and weaknesses and use the dedicated training techniques to target weaknesses or bolster strengths. For example, if a training tool has a dedicated sprint session, and you know your sprinting is quite weak, integrating these into your programme, monitoring your performance and tracking them over time is going to be a great way of taking your training to the next level.

An hour on the turbo is worth two on the road — but is it really?

The turbo is a super-effective way of getting in a high-quality training session. You don't have to cycle 10 miles to your local five-minute-long climb to do an effort, and you don't have to wait at any traffic lights. However, to say an hour on the turbo is worth two on the road is not exactly correct. If you're using a power meter or heart rate monitor effectively, you can still crack through a high-quality training session on the road, with minimum so-called junk miles.

What are the main disadvantages of using a turbo?

The main disadvantage is the one that deters most people: boredom. If you aren't particularly motivated or just generally don't enjoy sitting on the turbo, then using one all winter is your worst nightmare. On top of that, if you have a spouse or partner who doesn't enjoy their favourite TV shows being disrupted by the hum of a turbo, the reasons to avoid it accumulate.

What are the main advantages?

It's safer when the weather is harsh, you don't have to wash your bike afterwards, and it can be a quite relaxing way of training. It's the perfect tool for a time-crunched cyclist; there's no soft pedalling and, as an added bonus, there are fewer clothes to wash.





Why outdoor training is best: Steve Lampier

Steve Lampier of Team Raleigh GAC has very strong views on the indoor-versus-outdoor training debate

'Getting among the great outdoors makes it all worthwhile'

Bike riding [outdoors] is escapism. It's this freedom that makes it great, and I'm very fortunate that I've got all day to train, so I can get out during the day. If it is icy or snowy, I tend to go out on my cross bike, so I'm still doing something. I'm also very lucky that I get to go away on training camps and can escape the weather, but obviously if it is a safety thing or if you are restricted on time, a turbo-trainer does make sense.

'Riding outside improves your bike-handling'

If you avoid riding outside in bad weather or certain conditions, when it comes to a race or a sportive, you're going to be slipping and sliding, unable to handle your bike. It teaches you to be more wary and alert to reading road conditions.

'Tweak training to suit the conditions'

I do a lot of focused efforts in the winter by riding at higher zones to cut my training hours down. I can do a three-hour ride instead of five hours by condensing everything down — and still get the same numbers out of it. But when I go away on training camps in good weather, I do my longer base miles. Not everyone is in that position, but I think for most people indoor training should be viewed as a means to an end, just for when the weather's really bad. As a general rule of thumb, you should just get outside and grin and bear it.

How to make turbo time effective

Train with power: The new technology makes training with power accessible even without a conventional power meter. Using ANT+ sensors and turbos with known resistance curves makes it possible to give very accurate estimations.

Go structured: Using either power or HR, structured intervals are often much more practical to achieve on a turbo than they are outside. Fewer distractions, no traffic lights and no weather make it easier to concentrate on the target — even though the intervals are no easier to complete.

Integrate: Rather than knocking out random intervals, it's best to shape your indoor

training around a programme. It might be targeting specific weaknesses, like sprinting, or learning to hold a sustained hard effort over time to improve TT times.

Measure and test: The only way to judge whether you're improving is to establish a baseline, and then re-test it at regular intervals. FTP (Functional Threshold Power) is an excellent baseline. It's best calculated in watts and is best performed using a standard protocol. It gives you a number for your hardest sustainable effort over an hour — and it's this number that needs to be coaxed upward with training. Re-test around every six weeks or so.



Going the ultra distance

He may be in his late 40s, but Dominic Irvine recently became the first unsupported rider to complete the 606km Ultracycling Dolomitica

Chris Marshall-Bell

I can't remember the number of times I had to force myself to stay awake. I'd be rolling along the road with my eyes closed. I'd do everything to keep awake, even solving maths problems in my head. "I'd then hit a pothole and that would make me jump. 'Stay awake!' I'd tell myself."

Welcome to the life between 2am and 4am of ultra-distance cyclist Dominic Irvine. The Hampshire cyclist hit the headlines in May when he and Charlie Mitchell broke the tandem record by five hours, riding from Land's End to John o' Groats in just over 45 hours.

His sleep deprivation recollection, though, is not from his LEJOG journey; it's from his latest ride, September's Ultracycling Dolomitica: a non-stop 606km time trial involving 16,000m of climbing and 16 epic mountain passes in a loop around the Italian Dolomites.

Irvine could have been supported, but he opted to ride unsupported, buying food en route and carrying clothes and repair kit.

"Fitness I just had to get: that took time, effort and the right training. It was mainly a test of mental endurance. I knew I'd go through low points, that was inevitable," he recounts.

The inevitable included moments of anguish during the race — times when it seemed like the world was his foe. On these occasions, experience proved immeasurably valuable. The 47-year-old is not short of ultra-cycling knowledge, having ridden through the UK to Geneva

and completed the 535km Race Across the Alps.

As an indication of his experience, he says that "riding to Paris for lunch becomes a very reasonable training ride when your next race is at least twice that distance".

All those hours in the saddle ultimately paid off, he explains.

"From experience comes a profound sense of understanding that is truly liberating. Mentally, [Ultracycling Dolomitica] was so tough. At first when you suffer, it's unpleasant and deep, but I learned coping strategies so that the unpleasantness wasn't as deep or long."

Everything in place

"I had to be resistant to things that could go wrong, which meant having everything in place. At night I couldn't be fretting about the route or my power output — that's too much. I needed to put to bed those factors.

"I needed to plan ahead for potential problems to nullify them, working out before what might go wrong.

"The draw of abandoning can be immense. Deep fatigue and being cold and miserable can make it an easy decision. Continuing means developing an approach where it's not a question of 'if' I will finish but all the things I need to do to ensure I did finish."

Irvine didn't just finish; he was eighth fastest and the first solo unsupported rider to complete the race in its history.

All of which poses the question, why? "Three things appealed to me," he says. "I wanted a challenge that was pure: just me, the road and the bike."

"I also wanted to do something somewhere truly beautiful. I love cycling because of what you can see. It's the first time I've visited the Dolomites and it's a beautiful part of the world."

"Thirdly, I love ultra-distance cycling, and I love being unsupported most of all. It requires you to be able to navigate, deal with mechanicals, manage hydration and nutrition and have the mental resilience to cope with weather and the intense sense of remoteness on your own and in the dark."

The weather atop the cols — heavy rain, which turned to snow for later competitors — was an aspect of the challenge that Irvine couldn't have planned for. Everything else, though, was prepared for meticulously.

How it worked for me

■ Buy food en route: "Food can be heavy and you don't want increased weight when going up a 44km climb. There are always shops in villages and towns."

■ Prepare by doing a recce: "I can't emphasise enough the importance of experience. Only through practice can you eliminate problems."

■ Enjoy the surroundings. "It was so aesthetically beautiful. Enjoy the scenery. That's what is great about cycling."

Again, experience proved important. "I'd done about 15 night rides — experience is noted on a range of things," he says. "There was only one way of finding out what it would be like, and that was by training in conditions similar to those in which I was racing."

"Long hours, often overnight throughout the depth of winter had helped me find the right kit to survive bad weather, making the final decision on kit easy."

"The tools I carried were those that I'd found I wished I had with me when things had gone wrong in the past."

Of the race's 38 starters, only 20 finished. Irvine's eighth place overall was the reward for a measured approach.

Judging the effort

Restraining his speed was the method to success. "Every time I headed into the red, I severely impacted any chance of finishing well or at all, so I had to play the long game, hour after hour of constant effort," he explains.

"I rode at 230 watts all the time, which was nothing at first but at the end it was a lot harder to turn out. Although during the last six hours, I actually ramped it up to 260 watts."

"I was super-disciplined. You see the profile of other riders who were absolutely flying at points, and their profiles are full of spiked efforts, whereas my constant effort enabled me to have an 11mph average."

Irvine conquered a mental battle between logistics, proper planning, mental and physical exertion. Even more impressively, he claims that if he hadn't had to stop for food and to change clothes, he would have been two hours faster. Here is a man who has truly turned himself from an ordinary cyclist into a human pedalling machine.

Partner in pain: Charlie Mitchell

Charlie Mitchell rode the LEJOG tandem record with Irvine. "His approach to riding is essential to his accomplishments: he trains by power, he does specific sessions, he doesn't just ride for riding's sake, he rides for a point. His experience is massive, too," Mitchell says.

"He knows how to deal with situations like running out of food, and has contingency plans for seemingly everything. He's mentally very strong.

"He's very good to ride with. We have a good understanding: if he's standing up too much, I tell him. He has an enjoyable personality."

Stretching the truth

Yet more evidence that pre-race stretching is worse than pointless

Andrew Hamilton

Over the last 10 years or so, research has indicated that pre-exercise stretching offers no tangible performance benefits, and that, in sprint and power athletes, it could actually harm performance. Now, a new study suggests that pre-exercise stretching may harm your cycling performance too.

The science

On two separate occasions, eight male cyclists performed two incremental tests on a cycle ergometer, with and without pre-exercise stretching. During the tests, the cyclists' power output and oxygen consumption were continually monitored. The researchers looked at, in particular, the relationship between oxygen consumption and power output, both below and above the first ventilatory threshold — the workload at which a small increase in power produces a significant increase in breathing rate.

The results

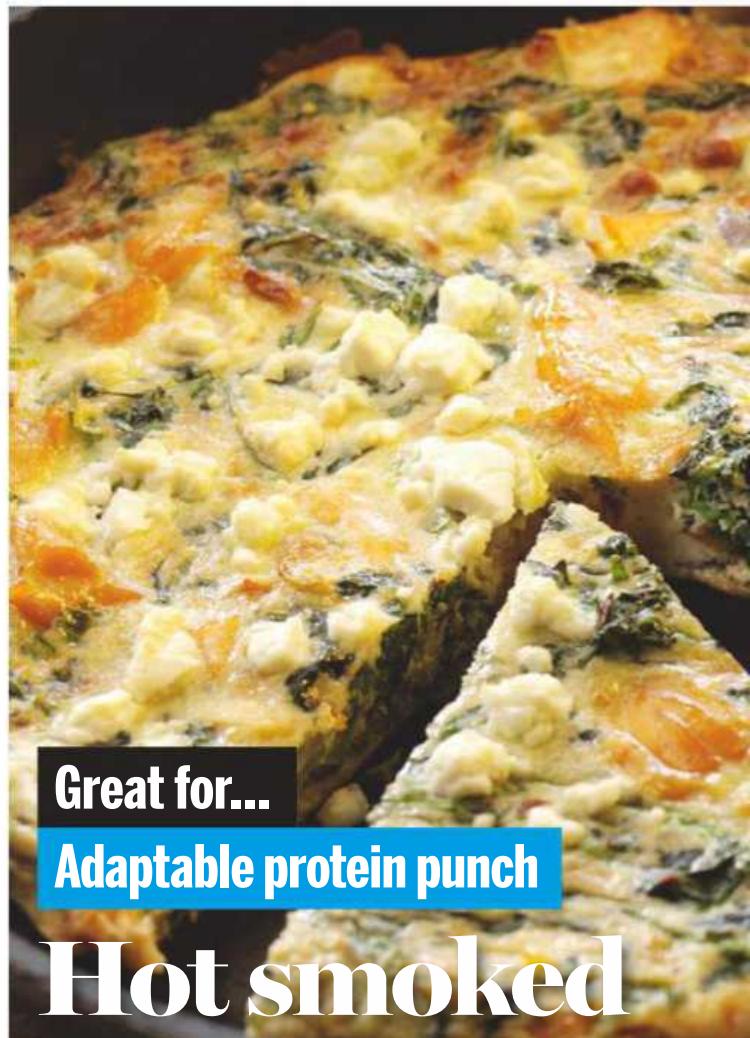
The key finding was that, at high effort levels,

the maximum oxygen consumption wasn't affected by pre-exercise stretching. However, the amount of power the cyclists were able to produce at those higher effort levels was significantly less, indicating that stretching had reduced the efficiency of the cyclists' muscles, making it harder for them maintain high power outputs.

What it means

The implications of this study are clear — pre-exercise stretching not only fails to improve cycling performance, but at higher effort levels may actually harm it. This implies that pre-exercise stretching has no legitimate place in a cycling warm-up.

That said, a warm-up without stretching remains worthwhile, especially if you're going to do high-intensity work. Generally, the harder and shorter the session/race, the more important the warm-up. Avoid passive stretches; instead, do 3-4min of dynamic stretches, e.g. gentle cycling, jogging on the spot, high-knee skips, lunges, etc.



Hot smoked salmon & watercress frittata

Simple and quick enough for breakfast, yet impressive enough to serve for supper or lunch with friends and family, this frittata is loaded with goodness. Rich in high-quality protein and healthy fats, antioxidants such as vitamins A, B and C as well as a variety of minerals including potassium and iron, a slice will help your muscles recover and repair after exercise and supercharge the immune system. If you're not a fan of fish, replace it with some cooked ham or chicken, or for a vegetarian option, try chickpeas or roasted sweet potato.



Time taken:
20 mins

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 6 spring onions, finely sliced
- 150g watercress
- 150g hot smoked salmon
- Zest of half a lemon
- ¼ tsp dried chilli flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch of ground nutmeg
- 10 large, free-range eggs
- 1 tbsp crème fraîche
- 25g feta cheese, thinly sliced

NUTRITION PER SERVING:

335
kcalories

5.5g
carbohydrates

26g
protein

24.5g
fat

METHOD:

- 1) Pre-heat the grill.
- 2) Warm the olive oil in a frying pan with an oven-proof handle and sauté the spring onions.
- 3) Add the watercress and stir, gently, until the watercress begins to wilt.
- 4) Remove the skin from the salmon, and flake it into the pan. Add the lemon zest and dried chilli.
- 5) Season the eggs with salt, pepper and nutmeg, add the crème fraîche and whisk until combined. Pour into the pan and cook over a gentle heat. Move mixture occasionally with spatula until frittata is set and the top is still wobbly.

TAKE-HOME TRAINING SESSION

Winter spice

This week JLT-Condor coach Tim Kennaugh of timkennaughcoaching.co.uk explains how variety in training remains important even during winter

Traditionally, winter is spent doing low-intensity mileage, building endurance. This works fine if you are able to train for 20 hours a week, i.e. the pros. Instead, I tend to focus on sessions that are ridden at tempo or at 76-90 per cent of functional threshold power, while also aiming to improve any riding weaknesses.

This session not only has you working in the tempo zone, which increases muscle glycogen storage, it also improves your lactate tolerance.

Start each session with a 15min warm-up before the first 15min effort. The first minute of the effort should simulate an attack in a race at a Zone 4 to 5 effort; ride the rest of the effort in Zone 2. As

the winter progresses and the season draws nearer again, increase the intensity of the 14min block or increase the one-minute effort to two minutes. Repeat the 15min effort three times, with five minutes of gentle rolling between each.

Conclude the session with a 15-minute cool down.

Time taken:
85 mins

Time (minutes)	Cadence (RPM)	Zone
0-15	90	1-2
15-16	100	4-5
16-30	95	2
30-35	85	1
35-36	100	4-5
36-50	55	2
50-55	85	1
55-56	100	4-5
56-70	95	2
70-85	85	1

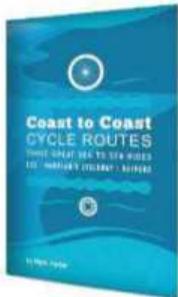
Effort	You can	It feels like you're...	Use it for...	% Max heart rate	% FT power
Easy Zone 1	Chat freely	Warming up	Warm-ups, cool-downs and recovery	60-65%	56-75%
Steady Zone 2	Speak one sentence at a time	Riding along in the bunch on the flat	Long rides	65-75%	76-90%
Brisk Zone 3	Speak a few words at a time	Breathing deeply and working hard	Long efforts of 10 to 20min	75-82%	91-105%
Hard Zone 4	Say only one word at a time	Really attacking (perhaps on a climb)	Efforts lasting 2-8min	82-89%	106-120%
Very hard Zone 5	Grunt and gasp	Sprinting	Efforts lasting less than 2min	89%-MHR	121%+

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by Mark Porter £11.99



Coast to Coast Cycle Routes is THE practical guide to crossing Britain. From West to East and East to West three different ways, following Britain's three most popular coast to coasters: the C2C, Hadrian's Cycleway and the Reivers. Paperback

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From the Grand Depart to the cobbles of Northern France and the majestic Alps and Pyrenees, 2015 provided non-stop excitement and spectacle. This book in detail the gripping battles, and drama, through stunning photography and detailed reports. Hardback

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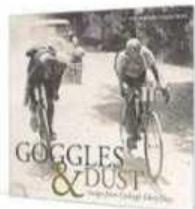
by Biju Thomas & Allen Lim £17.95



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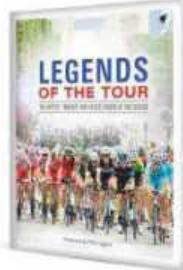
£9.99



In the never ending streams of fumes of pollution this book gives the average cycle enthusiast or, indeed novice, a collection of quotes, sayings and proverbs on even more reasons why one should get on their bike. In the format of the best selling Keep Calm and Carry On, Keep Calm and Pedal On is the perfect gift for keen bikers. Hardback

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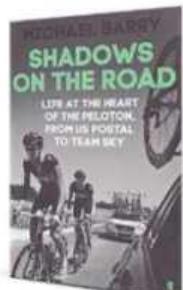
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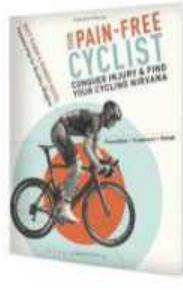
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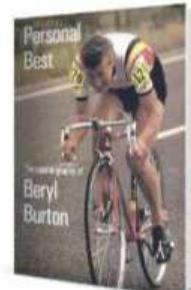
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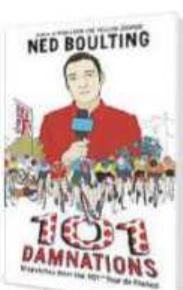
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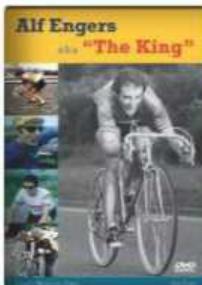
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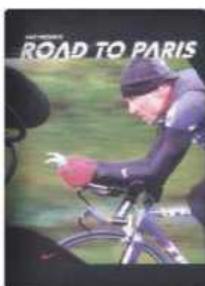
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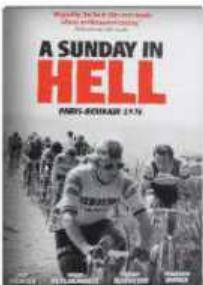
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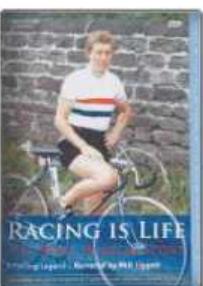
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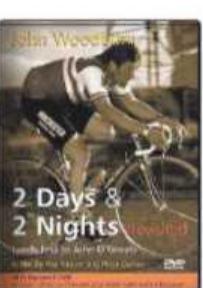
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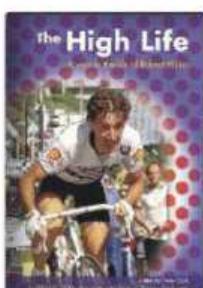
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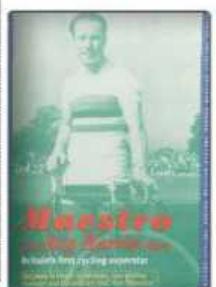
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Fred Whitton Challenge

CW
Difficulty
rating:
10/10

Next
year's
event:
May 8

112 miles
3,950 metres ascent

A climber's delight that takes on the toughest hills in the Lake District

John Walsh

People look at the Fred Whitton Challenge and see six climbs. Much to our surprise, we discovered nine. Those of you with a trained eye will have already noticed this from looking at the event profile. More fool us.

The headline six climbs loomed large in our minds when we were riding round, but we were to discover there's far more to

Where is it?

Grasmere, Cumbria. The ride starts and finishes on the edge of the picturesque Lakeland village home of Beatrix Potter, William Wordsworth and Grasmere gingerbread. The route takes in six famous Lakeland passes and includes large swathes of spectacular landscape in the famous National Park.

Why ride it?

Its self-proclaimed status as "Britain's premier cycle sportive" is no exaggeration. With all the big climbs of Lakeland riding included within the 112 miles, the total ascent here rivals that of big European events such as the Marmotte. The toughest climb, the Hardknott Pass, with its 30 per cent gradient, lies in wait after 98 miles.

History

The Fred Whitton is in its 16th year, a stalwart in the sportive calendar. The route was designed in memory of Fred Whitton, a popular member of the Lakes Road Club who died aged 50 in 1998. A staggering £1m has been raised by the event for charities Macmillan Cancer and the Mountain Rescue.



How to enter

Check out fredwhittonchallenge.co.uk for information. It's always over-subscribed; the ballot opens in January 2016 and the results are released in the second week of January.

HQ details

Grasmere Sports Ground in the central Lake District: a 40min drive along the A591 from junction 36 off the M6 from the south. Coming from the north or east, leave the M6 at junction 40 following the A66 and A591 via Keswick. The nearest train station is 20min away, in Windermere.

Where to stay

Beck Allan's

Guesthouse offers secure indoor bike storage. Grasmere Hostel has a wide range of facilities or treat yourself at the new Daffodil Hotel. For more options, visit golakes.co.uk/accommodation.

Where to eat

There are plenty of eating options in Grasmere. The Jumble Room offers great local food in a cosy setting. Tweedies Bar or Sara's Bistro are also excellent. The Rowan Tree is the place to go for homemade cake.

Local bike shop

For last-minute spares and repairs, head to Ambleside, four miles away, and the renowned Bike Treks.



If the number of climbs doesn't test you, their gradients surely will

the Whitton than just six climbs. The climbing begins with the highest: Kirkstone, which saw us pushing, out of the saddle, for three miles, winding between drystone walls. Then comes Honister, which is where Nairo Quintana et al battled up in the rain during the 2013 Tour of Britain. Newlands, with its 20 per cent gradient bend, lurks just before the summit, followed by Whinlatter, which is steeper than many an Alpine climb but modest by Lakeland standards.

School of hard knots

Next comes the infamous double switchbacks of Hardknott. With 100 miles in our legs, we found it a challenge just to keep the pedals turning. This culminates in Wrynose with its daring descent sandwiched between stone walls.

One that is seldom mentioned is Matterdale End. We found ourselves lulled into a false sense of security being swept along the shores of Ullswater, but as the route darts north and up Matterdale End, away from the lake, it quickly becomes a solemn, solitary experience as you settle in to find your own pace.

Fang's Brow comes at the 70-mile mark, another unmentioned climb, which bit us after a lovely section of Lakeland lanes alongside Loweswater. Finally, firmly outside the recognised

six climbs but not to be overlooked is Cold Fell. It certainly lived up to its name as we battled with unrepentant headwinds howling off the Irish Sea. But, without doubt, of these nine climbs, Hardknott is the king.

The Fred Whitton is clearly a route for climbers, but without razor-sharp descending skills you can come undone. We were tired when we hit the descents of Hardknott and Wrynose, and really had to turn our attention on. Organisers have seen serious accidents over the years, so stay focused and keep speed under control.

At 112 miles, it's not a shocking distance for the seasoned sportive rider, but if you are only worrying about the distance, you clearly haven't looked at the vertical ascent. If that's not enough to worry you, then take a look at the gradients of the climbs.

We finished our ride broken and vowing never to do it again. Every ounce of grit, determination and sweat we'd had was left out on the wild Lakeland roads.

But the Fred Whitton is not just a sportive. Over the last 16 years, it has established itself as an institution, a milestone for many cyclists and a nemesis that taunts riders. Those who vow never to do it again tend to throw their name in the hat for the following year. Maybe we'll see you out there. ■

ORGANISER'S TARGET TIMES

Distance	Ave speed	Time
112 miles	12mph	9hr20min
112 miles	15mph	7hr28min
112 miles	18mph	6hr14min

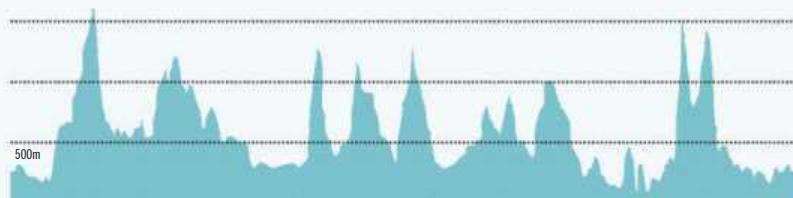
Riders must cross the finish line by 6pm. There are two key time cut-offs at the feed stations: 12 noon at Braithwaite and 3.30pm at Calder Bridge.

The challenges

1 Honister Pass

A real Lake District welcome is provided with a 25 per cent ramp right in front of you at the foot of the climb. When you reach the cattle grid, the pain lets up.

2000m



2 Cold Fell

If the prevailing south-westerly is blowing off the Irish Sea, the open fell is brutally exposed and the headwind punishing. Seek shelter behind your fellow riders.

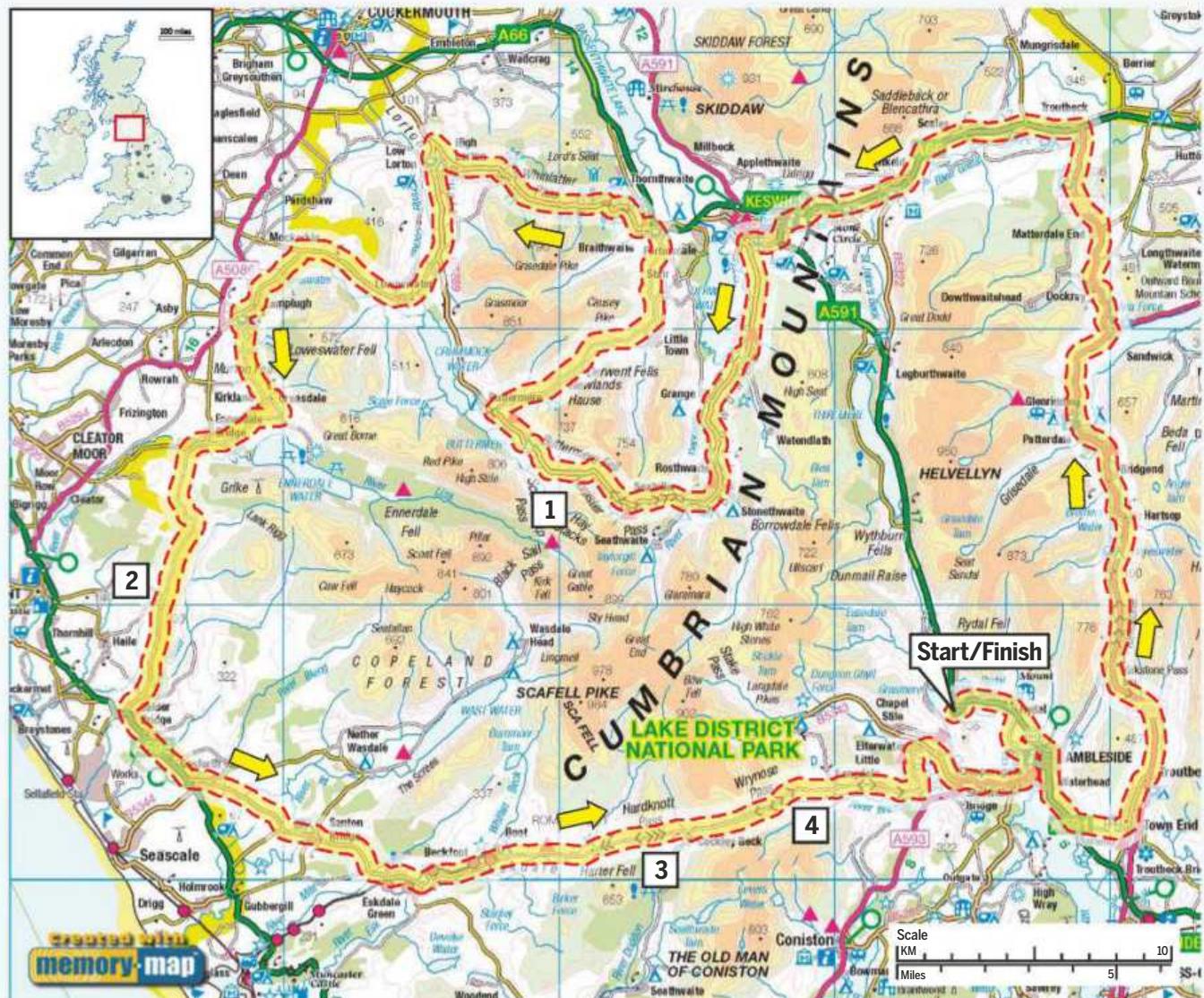
3 Hardknott

Avoid being in the 70 per cent of riders who are reduced to walking. At the implausibly steep bends, get out of the saddle and keep your weight forward.

NAIL IT

4 Wrynose Pass

Hardknott gets all the headlines, but the key to a strong finish is having something in your legs for the Wrynose Pass. It is the easier little brother and the sixth and last of the main climbs. It starts gently but there is a short, steep final kick at the top where the muscles can seize if you've emptied the tank too early. Maintain your focus over the top, as the descent is straight and fast at first, giving you a false sense of security before some wickedly tight corners in the bottom section. Tackling the descent is as critical as mastering the climb.



Event website: www.fredwhittonchallenge.co.uk

Cycle Club Bexley

Christopher Hovenden joins the well-established North Kent club for its weekly 50-mile group training ride

Misfortune strikes without warning. One moment we are ticking along at a nice pace, the next we hear the unmistakable sound of a chain snapping.

The bad luck has befallen CC Bexley's time trial secretary and recorder Ken Gardner. As the members gather round to offer pearls of wisdom on how to fix said chain and tell their own tales of woe, Gardner tells me a little about the club: "When I joined, I was encouraged to race, but even then the social side was a large part of the club and this is definitely still the case today."

He confirms (or contradicts?) this by freewheeling down the hill back to his home shouting: "I'll see you at the cafe!"

CC Bexley's club runs, led by their self-appointed social media guru Murray Spencer, aim to seek out the best lanes and routes in North Kent. The rides start at the Lion pub in Farningham, where, at around 8.45am every Sunday, you are bound to see a congregation of blue, white and yellow-clad cyclists.

Something for everyone

"It's a good all-round traditional cycling club. Everyone is welcome, no one's turned away," says Mark Vowells, who is chairman of the club's committee. The range of riders in the club certainly reflects this ethos: a growing number of the more competitive members are racing in local time trials, some members are relative newcomers to cycling, others

are into various disciplines of racing, and a fair proportion have retired from competition yet continue to attend various club gatherings.

Joe Cumberland, who only joined the club a few months ago and is looking to start racing next season, seems to be going well on his immaculate Bianchi. "The club runs, along with everyone's encouragement, have really helped my confidence when riding in a group," he says. "Angela [Spencer] kindly sold me her Bianchi and it's been great to see my times coming down in the evening 10s."

The club's popular summer time trials start near the Brands Hatch motor circuit and attract around 30 riders a week, from hardened time triallists to first-timers.

History

CC Bexley was formed in 1966 following the union of three clubs: Long Valley CC, Thames Road Club and Ruxley Wheelers. Following almost 50 fruitful years, they are looking forward to celebrating their golden anniversary in 2016.

The club has long been associated with its distinctive blue and yellow kit. Although the team strip was revamped five years ago, it retains the bold blue and yellow combination; the addition of white further increases the visibility of the CC Bexley. You'll find them riding around some of the best country lanes Kent has to offer.

The club has been very active in the cycle racing community,

be it producing racers or hosting events. A healthy contingent of members raced competitively in the Seventies and Eighties and continue to provide raucous support during the summer evening 10s, before toasting the riders at the Horton Kirby Cricket Club. Impressively, there is still a monthly club magazine delivered to each member's door, keeping everyone up to date with the club's activities.

■ CC Bexley hosts a number of events throughout the year. These include the evening 10-mile time trial summer series from April to August, a hill-climb, an open 10-mile time trial, a reliability ride, and roller racing during winter. There are multiple social events: a Christmas

buffet, summer barbecue and prize-giving dinner.

Achievements

■ The club actively encourages all sorts of racing, from road racing to time trialling and even tricycle racing. In fact, between 1956 and 1959, Clarice Masterson set multiple national time trial records on a tricycle. Masterson isn't the only successful tricycle rider; Ian Finch, who holds the club 10-mile time trial record on two wheels, has set national trike records too.

■ The club's most notable rider is Kathryn Kitt (named Miles at the time). Kitt raced in the 1986 Tour Féminin, the female equivalent of the Tour de France. She went on to compete in the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games as a tandem pilot for blind para-athlete Robert Allen in the road race, track sprint and pursuit. Unfortunately, the reigning European champions were unable to add the Paralympic title, as Kitt's build-up was hindered by a leg break.

Club facts

Based: Bexley, North Kent

Members: 66

Formed: 1966

Meets: Sunday at 8.45am on the bridge outside the Lion, Farningham. On Wednesdays riders will be found frequenting the Jungle Cafe in West Malling.

CC Bexley also have monthly club nights at the Malt Shovel in Eynsford and evening 10-mile series throughout the summer.

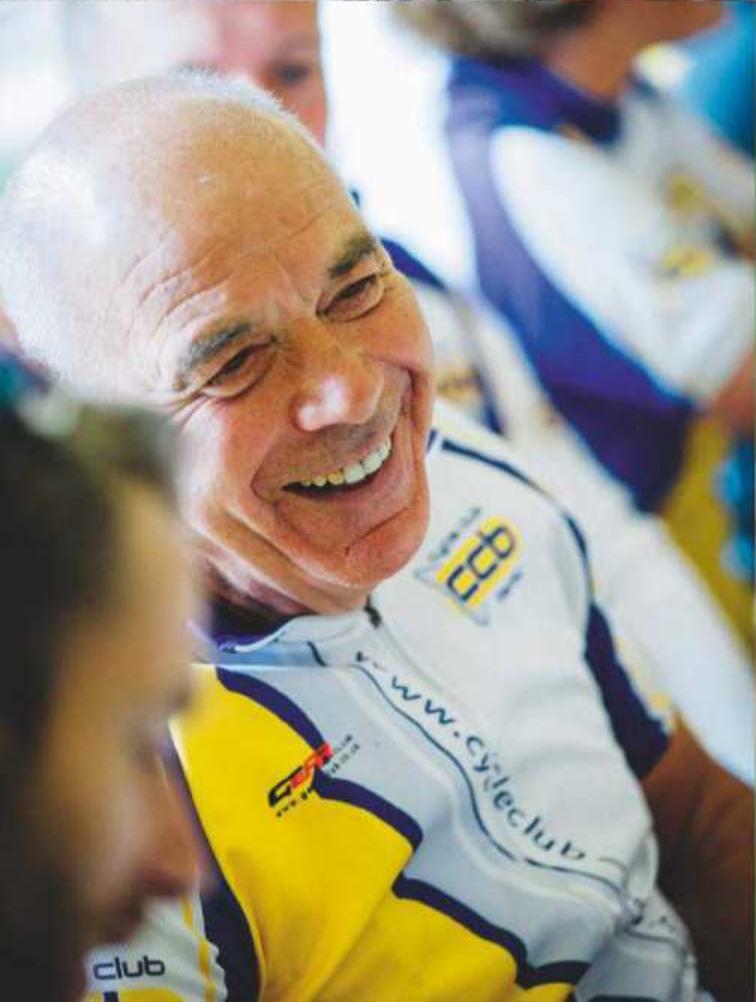
All about the banter

After rolling through beautiful countryside, at Pilgrims Way a few riders opt for the more direct route to the cafe, whereas the group's hardier souls convince me to ride the long route, promising not-to-be-missed lanes.

As the bunch ascend Grey Ladies, I ask Andy Elford, a member of 20 years, what the club means to him. "I thoroughly enjoy these club runs. They're fun and good for my training," he says.

It turns out Elford has recently been promoted to 'club chef' at the summer





Cycling Club Bexley club run

Ride highlights

1 Grey Ladies

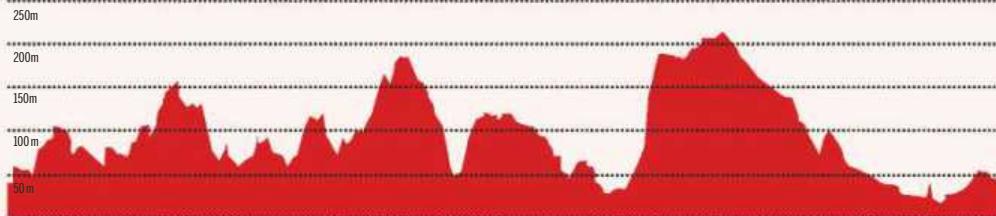
A nice, long, steady climb that is largely sheltered and has some lovely grey-topped oast houses at its summit. At the top, you are rewarded with a view that is pleasant at any time of the year.

2 Birling Hill

Be prepared for this fairly long and steep climb. There are alternative routes to avoid this climb, but if you want a real sense of achievement just before the cafe stop, it's a must-do.

3 The ride down through Meopham

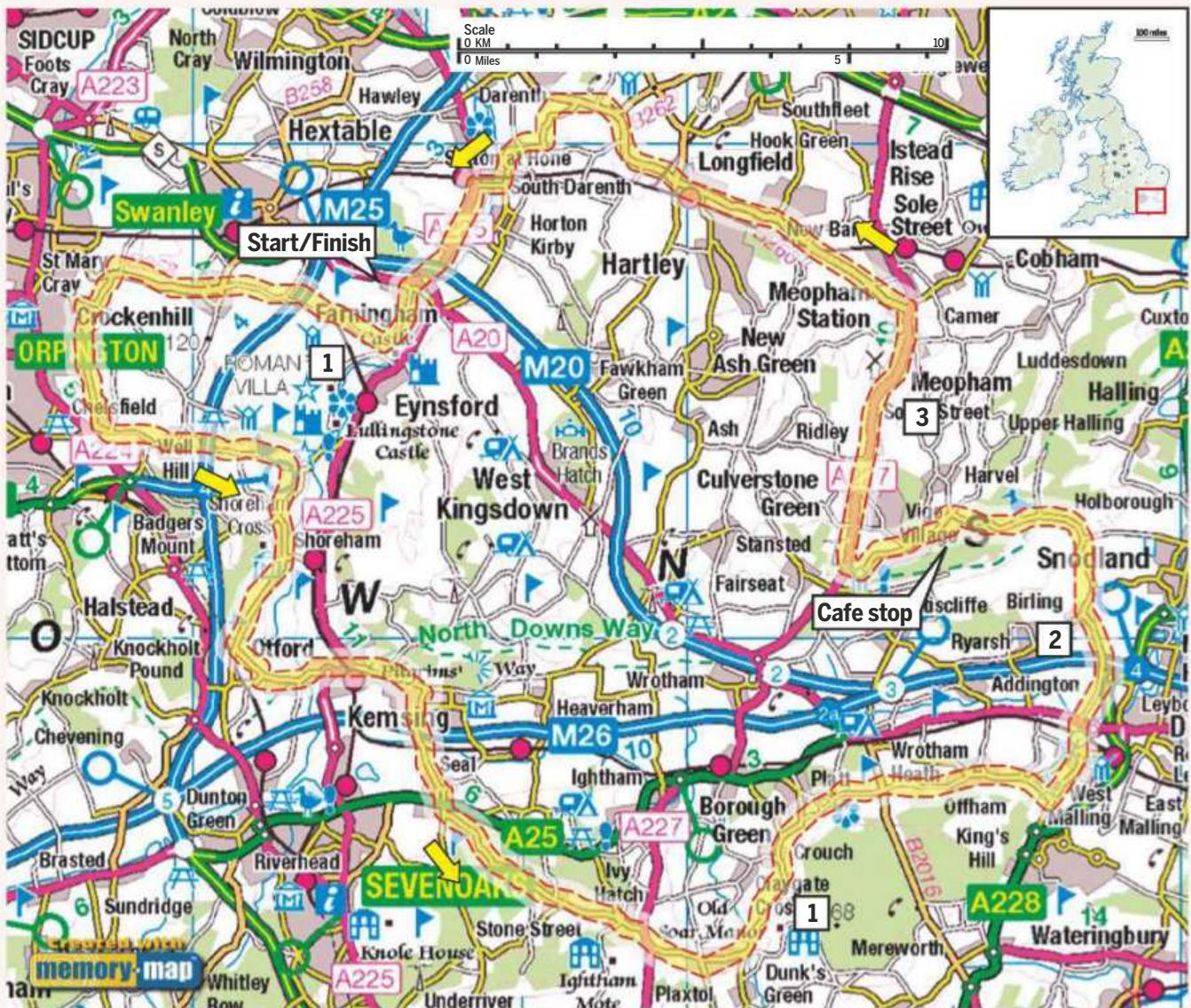
After leaving the cafe, this long stretch of predominantly straight road is a favourite for many and is an opportunity for some chaingang training.



Favourite cafe

Set within the picturesque surroundings of Trosley Country Park, the Bluebell Cafe is a welcome reward after the main challenges of the ride have been completed. It is not only CC Bexley that favour the Bluebell; several other groups of cyclists and families enjoy the pleasant surroundings. The food and refreshments were substantial in size and reasonably priced. The 'doorstep' sandwiches are very popular, as are the cakes.

Bluebell Cafe, Trosley Country Park, Waterlow Road, Vigo, DA13 0SG; Tel. 01732 820315; www.tinyurl.com/njkhed





Coffee stop at the Bluebell Cafe, with Charlie Lacroix (centre)



Bexley has a strong veteran contingent



Kent's lanes provide plenty of scope for picturesque long rides

barbecues, but before he can regale me with his culinary successes one rider calls out: "Miraculously there've been no cases of food poisoning!" This kind of friendly ribbing is prevalent throughout the ride, and there is a definite feel of openness and esprit de corps.

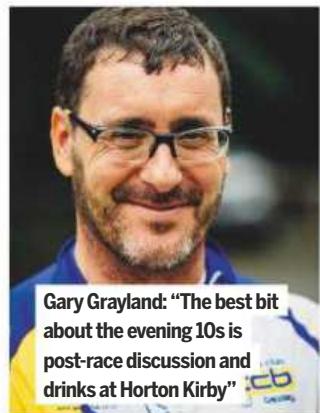
On the approach to the final climb of Birling Hill, I confide in Gary 'Rolling Thunder' Grayland, who's earned his

nickname by becoming serial club champion, that I hope the cafe is close because I'm starting to feel the dreaded knock. "Spin up the hill, take it steady and we're almost there," he reassures me. After a short wait at the top of the hill, we cruise to the cafe to refuel and catch up with everyone else.

Once we've gorged ourselves on a variety of tasty

sandwiches and cakes, we all enjoy the fast descent back towards Bexley and Dartford. Although some of the group peel off to ride home, a few continue on to Murray and Angela Spencer's house for a post-ride coffee. A few weeks ago, they tell me, there was an impromptu barbecue complete with ice cream van. It is with this rather pleasant image that I set off home.

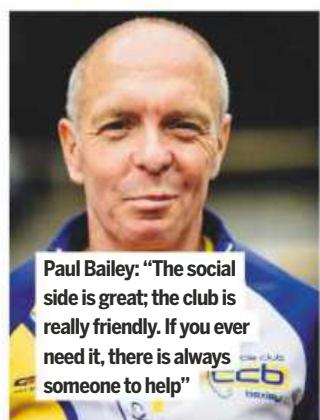
Meet the club



Gary Grayland: "The best bit about the evening 10s is post-race discussion and drinks at Horton Kirby"



Maria Mayell: "We try to get out on Sundays, when the ride caters for cyclists of all abilities"



Paul Bailey: "The social side is great; the club is really friendly. If you ever need it, there is always someone to help"



Angela Spencer: "It's a lovely club — everyone is really friendly and supportive"

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Long Hill

Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire



Simon Warren

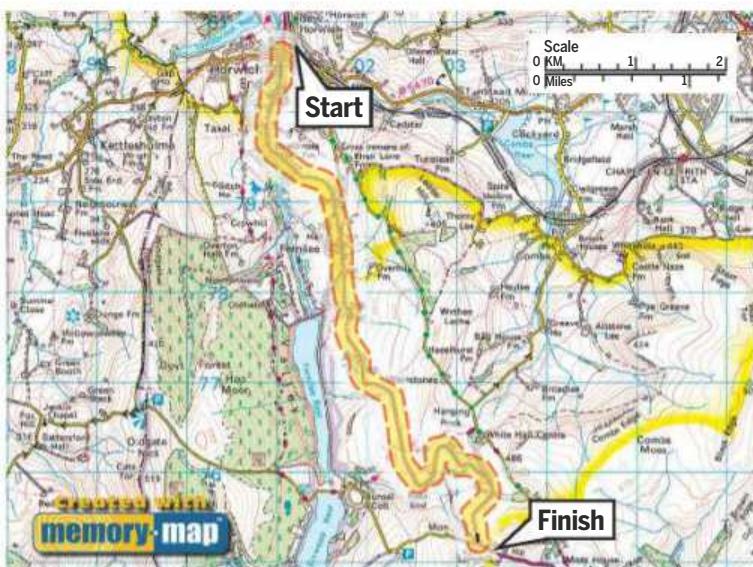
Long Hill was the scene of the infamous 2011 National Hill-Climb Championship: won by a rider using tri-bars, yes, tri-bars! The course record currently held by Tejvan Pettinger stands at 12:16, which is an average speed of 21.7mph. Yes, for a hill-climb.

At over four miles and with an average gradient of just 3.5 per cent, it strays significantly from the ethos of the event in my eyes.

But a hill it is nonetheless and a specialist climber still took the crown over an all-out tester.

The climb starts as you leave Whaley Bridge, through Horwich End on the meandering A5004 as it makes its way towards Buxton. For the most part you travel due south, however it does begin to writhe and twist through the last mile up to the junction with Goyt's Lane. Steep it may not be, but its eponymous length attracts local pros here for their interval sessions.

CW
Difficulty rating:
2/10



The stats

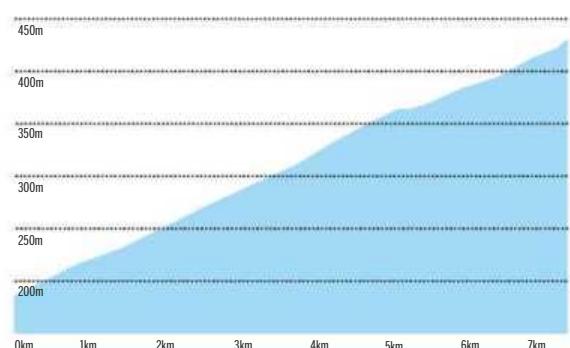
WHERE Head south out of Whaley Bridge on the A4005 Buxton Road, to start the climb once you have crossed the B5470 in Horwich End.



KOM Top Tip Think disc wheels, tri-bars, skinsuits and pointy helmets.

7.5km 427m 253m 3.5% 6%

Length	Summit height	Height gain	Average gradient	Max gradient
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Strava file: www.strava.com/segments/612792

Lansley lands the win

Adrian Lansley led the PedalOn team to a clean sweep of the podium in round eight of the Wessex Cyclo-Cross League held at Oxford Brooks University on Sunday.

The 38-year-old from Newbury took the win after team-mate Sam Allen, who had been alongside him for much of the race, slipped with just two corners left and had to settle for second. Chris Minter was third and Helen Pattinson (Solent Pirates) best woman.

Elsewhere in cyclo-cross, Mark Cotton (Elmore Factory Racing) took his second victory of the season with a strong performance in the Lincolnshire League meeting at Ostler's Plantation near Woodhall Spa. He was over 1-30 clear of Nathan Wilson (Wilson's Wheels) at the flag, while Sam Burman (Team WNT) was fastest female.

Also securing win number two for the season was Stephen James, the Renvale RT rider who won the Eastern League race at Bury St Edmunds by 27 seconds from junior Dougal Toms (Iceni Velo). In the women's race, Jackie Field (CC Ashwell) overhauled early leader Anna Buick to take the win.

In Kent, Chris Ansell (Team



Unbeatable: Lansley dominated in Oxford

Corridori) mastered the mud to win round eight of the London League at Penshurst Off-Road Centre. He held off the previous week's winner Jonathan Dennis (Hackney GT) by more than three minutes, while 17-year-old Holly MacMahon (WXC Racing) was best woman.

It was business as usual in the Lazer North West League, where Giles Drake won his sixth round at Cartmel Racecourse in Cumbria, before heading to Durham to ride the National Trophy 24 hours later. Martha Gill (Marin) was the fastest female.

Also on Saturday, Paul Oldham (Hope Factory Racing) warmed up for the following day's National Trophy when he powered to victory in round seven of the North East Series. He was 38sec ahead of CXNE regular Tony Fawcett (Vieri Velo), while Hannah Saville (CX Magazine) was best female.

Teenager Harry Johnston (Pro Vision Cycle Clothing) was victorious in round three of the Scottish League by more than a minute and a half at Strathclyde, while Allan Clark (Velocity 44) took second by seven seconds from third-placed Neil Walker (Walkers CC).

Rider of the week

Tom Pidcock (Oldfield-Paul Milnes Cycles)

The 16-year-old from Leeds was GB's best junior finisher with eighth in the European Champs on Saturday, and then won his category at Sunday's National Trophy in Durham.

Cyclo-cross

Sunday, November 8

British Cycling National Trophy Series round three (Durham Univ Cricket Club):

Elite Men: 1. Ian Field (Hargroves Cycles-Ridley) **1:02.17**; 2. D. Fletcher (Pine Cycles) +0.46; 3. N. Craig (Scott Racing) +0.55; 4. B. Sumner (Beeline-Gener8) +1.42; 5. S. Roach (Raleigh GAC) +1.58; 6. P. Oldham (Hope Factory Racing) +2.15; 7. G. Drake (Leisure Lakes Bikes) +2.52; 8. J. Clarkson (Hope Factory Racing) +3.01; 9. D. Booth (Hope Factory Racing) +3.20; 10. S. James (Hargroves Cycles) +3.42.

Elite Women: 1. Beth Crompton (North West CC) **44.02**; 2. A. Mellor (Oldfield-Paul Milnes Cycles) +0.07; 3. H. Payton (Kinesis UK) +1.45; 4. E. Wadsworth (Beeline-Gener8) +2.15; 5. D. Beddis (VICIOUS Velo) +2.48; 6. A. Simpson (Hope Factory Racing) +3.14; 7. M. Pacios Pujado (Zappi's RT) +4.10; 8. S. Thackray (Oldfield-Paul Milnes Cycles) +4.40; 9. A. Van Twisk (Corley Cycles-Drops) +5.18; 10. I. Rowntree (Islabikes) +5.28.

Under-23: Nick Barnes (Hargroves Cycles)

Women Veterans: Maddi Smith (Bolsover and Dist CC)

Veterans 40-49: Rob Jebb (Hope Factory Racing)

Veterans over-50: Tim Gould (Zepnat RT)

Juniors: Tom Pidcock (Oldfield-Paul Milnes Cycles)

Under-16 boys: Euan Cameron (East Bradford CC)

Under-16 girls: Poppy Wildman (Nottingham Clarion)

Under-14 boys: Emilia Alexander (Lichfield City CC)

Under-14 girls: Maddie Wadsworth (Beeline Bicycles)

Scottish Series round three (Strathclyde Park, Lanarkshire):

Seniors: 1. Harry Johnston (Pro Vision Cycle Clothing) **51:03**; 2. A. Clarke (Velocity 44 Stirling) +1.39; 3. N. Walker (Walkers Cycling Club) +1.46; 4. M. Nicholson (Dooleys-Cycles.co.uk) +2.08; 5. G. Jones (Velo Club Moulin) +3.15; 6. I. Dunlop (Velo Club Moulin) +3.26; 7. S. Logan (Harts Cyclery) +3.33; 8. W. Barr (Velocity 44 Sterling) +4.12; 9. S. Couper (Glasgow United CC) +5.02; 10. C. Magowan (Peebles CC) +5.18.

Veterans: Gary McCrae (Leslie Bike Shop/Bikers Boutique) 42.39

Under-16 boys: Jack Cruden (Glasgow Riderz) 27.03

Under-16 girls: Anna McGorum (Peebles CC) 27.37

BWA West Midlands League round nine (Bromsgrove):

Seniors: 1. Philip Hinch (Brotherton Cycles) **51:28**; 2. G. Moore (Biciclo) +0.24; 3. T. Payton (Islabikes) +1.19; 4. J. Hicks (Rugby Velo) +2.24; 5. M. Dennis (Renvale RT) +2.36; 6. C. Miller (Ride Coventry) +2.49; 7. A. Neave (Stourbridge CC) +3.07; 8. S. Knight (Team Jewson) +4.21; 9. J. Garrett (Rugby Velo) +4.56; 10. R. Burns (Islabikes) +5.10

Veteran: Ian Wright 45.27

Women: Ceris Styler (Halesowen A & CC) 53.09

Under-16: Jamieson Blain (Halesowen A & CC) 31.37

Lincolnshire League round seven (Ostlers Plantation, Woodhall Spa):

Seniors: 1. Mark Cotton (Elmore Factory Racing) **55.35**; 2. N. Wilson (Wilson's Wheels RT) +1.35; 3. D. Earth (JP Racing/Raleigh) +1.38; 4. B. Kiers (Bourne Wh) +2.01; 5. M. Gee (Arrow Cycles) +2.14; 6. H. Thompson (Sleaford Wh) +2.49; 7. K. Brown (Bolsover and District CC) +2.53; 8. G. Saunderson (Peturia RT) +2.59; 9. S. Sayers (Lutterworth RC) +3.15; 10. B. Moore (Spalding CC) +3.59

Junior: Mark Gee (Arrow Cycles)

Women: Sam Burman (Team WNT)

Veterans: Richard Lister (Team WNT) 40.08

Under-16: Robert McAndrew (Witham Wh) 24.56

London League round eight (Penshurst Off-Road Centre, Kent):

Seniors: 1. Chris Ansell (Team Corridori) **1:01.57**

2. J. Dennis (Hackney GT) +3.04; 3. P. Hough (Lewes Wanderers) +3.13; 4. D. Drake (VC Deal) +3.43; 5. J. Wakeling (BowPhish Bontrager Racing) +4.11; 6. M. Noble (Specialized) +5.15; 7. D. Braid (Team Corridori) +5.16; 8. A. Blomley (5th Floor CC) +5.28; 9. W. Sinclair (Pearson Cycles) +5.59; 10. C. McGovern (unattached) +6.00.

Juniors: Toby Martin (4t+ Velo)

Veterans: 40-49: Roger Fowkes (West Drayton MBC)

Over-50s: Doug Fox (Crawley Wh)

Women: Holly MacMahon (WXC Racing)

Youth: Titouan Barthélémy (Herne Hill YCC)

Western League round eight (Middlemoor Waterpark, Bridgewater):

Seniors: 1. Alex Whiting (Bolsover and Dist CC) **59.26**; 2. D. Hall (BW Cycling) +0.10; 3. A. King (unattached) +4.20; 4. A. Burridge (Bristol CX) +4.39; 5. D. Barnaville (Bristol CX) +4.57; 6. J. Britton (Bristol CX) +5.10; 7. P. Giddings (VC Walcot) +5.26; 8. J. Linden (Royal Dean Forest CC) +6.22; 9. D. Shephard (Cheltenham and County CC) +6.47; 10. C. Revell (Somerset RC) +7.56.

Under-23s: Adam King

Veterans: Chris Rathbone (Somerset RC)

Women: Flo Daniel (unattached)

Youth: Harry Burchill (Team Certini)

Wessex League round eight (Westminster Sports Centre, Oxford):

Seniors: 1. Adrian Lansley (PedalOn) **58.25**;

2. S. Allen (PedalOn); 3. C. Minter (PedalOn); 4. J. Hickerton (Eden Veranda); 5. R. Smith (Team Moore Fitness); 6. K. Norfolk (PedalOn); 7. T. Budden (Sotonia CC); 8. N. Onslow (PedalOn); 9. M. Guildford (VC Meudon); 10. M. Wakefield (unattached).

Veterans: 40-49: Lewis King (Beeline Cycles)

Over-50s: Tim Costello (GS Vecchi)

Women: Helen Pattinson (Solent Pirates)

Juniors: Tom Sewell (Cotswold Veldrijden)

Saturday, November 7

Lazer North West League round nine (Cartmel Racecourse, Cumbria):

Seniors: 1. Giles Drake (Leisure Lakes Bikes);

2. M. Wardle (Wheelbase Altura); 3. T. Martin (Furness Future Flyers); 4. J. Peatfield (Horwich CC); 5. T. Jones (Cycle Sport Pendle); 6. M. Fretwell (Escape Bike Shop); 7. D. Powell (Horwich CC); 8. M. Woffinden (Team Moda Anor); 9. R. Knowles (Ride On Bikes); 10. T. Loftus (Wheelbase Altura).

Juniors: Tom Martin

Veterans: David Haygarth (Carnac Planet X)

Women: Martha Gill (Marin Stan's No Tubes)

Under-16 boys: Isaac Peatfield (Bolton Hot Wheels CC)

Under-16 girls: Kim Baptista (Nutcracker Racing)

North East Series round seven (Durham Univ Cricket Club):

Seniors: 1. Paul Oldham (Hope Factory Racing) **55.58**;

2. T. Fawcett (Vieri Velo) +0.38; 3. T. Craig (Scott Racing) +0.58; 4. D. Lines (Velosure Starley Primal) +1.21; 5. S. Wearmouth (MTS Cycle Sport) +2.02; 6. L. Shunburne (Fossa Racing) +3.55; 7. J. Thompson (Rutland CC) +5.51; 8. G. Taylor (Blumilk.com) +6.12; 9. J. Alder (Cycleways Sports and Leisure) +6.48; 10. D. Penfold (unattached) +7.17.

Under-23s: Tom Craig

Veterans: 40-49: Nick Craig (Scott Racing)

Over-50s: Robin Delve (Mid-Devon CC)

Women: Hannah Saville (CX Magazine.com)

Under-16 boys: Struan Pryde (Deside斯蒂斯利CC)

Under-16 girls: Alex Rimmer (M'tain Goat Coaching)



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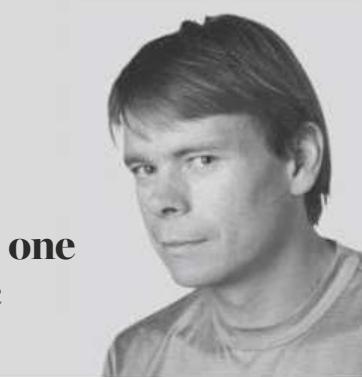
Want to seem knowledgeable about cycling? Commit to just one obscure rider, advises the Doc

doctorhutch_cycling@timeinc.com

You may recall Peter Sagan's daredevil descent of the Col de Manse during this year's Tour de France. It was the one where the commentators did nothing but yak on about the crash in 2003 where Joseba Beloki's career ended and where Lance Armstrong ended up riding across a field.

Even if you remember Sagan's ride, I bet you can't remember who he was chasing. I can. In fact, I was on the descent (at the corner where Beloki crashed and, I promise, not at all motivated by any ghoulish hope that history would repeat itself in some way).

When a Lampre-Merida rider flashed past well clear of the rest of the race, there was a general



cry from the spectators around me of, "Who the hell was that? No, seriously, who?"

"Rubén Plaza," I said.

And all about me were greatly amazed, and hailed me as a cycle sport guru of a high order.

The truth is, of course, that if it had been almost any other Lampre-Merida rider I wouldn't have had a clue. Indeed, if it had been any other domestique, I wouldn't have had a clue. Essentially I just lucked out with the one non-star I could pick out.

Crowned Plaza

I've always kept an eye on Rubén Plaza, mainly because his name sounds like a Las Vegas shopping mall. You'd be amazed how many chances I get to show off this eccentric interest and just how well informed it makes me look.

I was able to appraise those around me of his palmarès. He was fifth in the Vuelta in 2005. He was 11th in the Tour in 2010 — a result he managed to achieve while attracting almost no attention from anyone other than me. There is always the assumption that if you know something as off the beaten track as the Grand Tour record of Rubén Plaza, you must also know everything else that there is to know about cycling.

I took a similar interest in Vladimir Karpets. In fact, I so badly wanted to see the headline "Unbelievable Flying Karpets!" that I let the wish be father of the thought, and when I was appearing on a TV show on the eve of the 2007 Tour, I offered the suggestion that the king-size



Acts of Cycling Stupidity

A conversation recently with a cycling friend (not Bernard, whose wisdom features so regularly in these pages):

"My riding in the last couple of days has been really odd," my friend told me. "To be honest, I'm worried there might be something wrong with me."

I mumbled something that may, or may not, have been, "How fascinating, pray, do tell me more. Omit no detail, however slight."

"I've got a very high pulse," he said. "And I'm worried that it might mean I'm coming down with an infection. But I'm also producing a really high power output — it's probably 25 per cent higher than normal for this time of year."

"So," I said, "to be clear, your power is up, and your pulse is up as well?"

"Yes."

"Has it ever occurred to you that maybe you're just trying too hard?"

Russian was going to win. It was a wildly wide-of-the-mark prediction that one or two of my colleagues find opportunities to mention even today.

At the time, though, I was able to make a case. He'd won the 2007 Tour of Switzerland, and I was able to point to other successes now long forgotten by everyone who is neither me nor Vladimir's mum. The prediction was wrong, but for a full week, until the first mountain stage, I was a genius, for all anyone could prove to the contrary.

I can remember how this all started. In 1994, the Channel 4 Tour coverage had a competition



GO BO HAMBURGER!

“I knew nothing about cycling, but I followed Hamburger with relish”

to predict the winner of stage eight — it was the Dane, Bo Hamburger. 1994 was the very beginning of my interest in cycling, and I knew nothing, but I started following Hamburger with relish. I quickly learned more about him than I knew about Miguel Indurain and Eddy Merckx put together. Following the fortunes of a random rider gave everything that was happening in the race so

much more depth than had just watching the stars. It's amazing how often a rider crops up once you've decided to focus on them — in breaks, in crashes, in lead-out trains. And every time, you get the little thrill that comes only from being an insider.

(Incidentally, Hamburger retired in 2006. He started a building company and a bike shop. And until 2014, he was directeur sportif at Danish Pro Continental team Christina Watches.)

I highly recommend you try it. Pick a rider, and start being a fan. But you can't have Rubén Plaza. He's mine.

How to... wear a world champion's jersey

Wearing the distinctive jersey of world champion is a privilege, and not something to be taken lightly. Many riders have bought one in a local shop because they thought it would look cool, only for friends and random strangers alike to take them to task for failing to respect the sport's grand champions by buying a jersey that "can only be earned". But it's all a matter of detail. You just have to be the right kind of rider.

The first thing you need to do is get down to racing weight. To wear the jersey, you have to look lean and hungry, like the sort of man who can punch up the steepest of climbs with the best of riders.

You need a tan, the sort that only comes from serious riding, one that leaves a white mark where your helmet strap crosses your cheek. You'll need to get the rest of your kit right — the bike, the wheels — and it must all be immaculately clean.

You need to look right when you sit on a bike. Maybe you can do this with a bike-fit, or maybe you'll just need to do a lot of riding. Get out there, get the miles in, and get that almost indefinable feel and look of being fully at one with your machine.

You'll need to win the World Championships. And, most importantly of all, you'll need to avoid wearing your jersey with white shorts.



Shirt of a champion, girth of several



Silca Pista pump

Simon Smythe celebrates a design classic that is still going strong nearly 100 years after its launch

In a disposable, throwaway world where cycling components may or may not last until the next iteration Silca has been a constant. For almost a century, the classic Pista floor pump the Italian firm first unveiled in 1917 has been the one favoured by mechanics, racers and indeed any cyclist who values efficiency, durability and rebuildability over cheapness.

And you can bet your bottom lira that there are Silca pumps from the mid 20th century that are still in service thanks to the company staying faithful to its iconic design for decade after decade and making available replacement parts so that Silca owners — and their descendants — can enjoy the world's best bicycle pump for years to come.

A Silca Pista pump with

the usual patina of age — rust spots, chipped base and peeling sticker but working as smoothly as ever of course — is a trophy, a statement that its owner is a real cyclist.

The Silca Pista was made from the finest materials. The steel tubing for the pump barrel was produced by fellow Italian icon Columbus. Inside the barrel, a plunger made from superior quality leather, rather than rubber, drove the air downwards. The supplier of these leather washers — a company that makes designer briefcases — has worked with Silca since 1946.

The handle was originally wood, but the mid-century models have a solid, textured plastic handle reminiscent of the famous Cinelli Unicanitor saddle of that era.

The gauge promised an unearthly 240psi — the sort of pressure that Eddy Merckx might have requested in his silk tubs for the Hour record on the Mexico City track in 1972.

Perfect Poertner-ship

Recently, Silca's fortunes have taken an interesting turn. In 2013 the ageing Claudio Sacchi, grandson of the founder, began to look for a successor in the cycle industry, having accepted that his own family would not take on the company. By this point, Silca — although of course still revered by cycling's old hands — had become yesterday's floor pump manufacturer as younger cycling-boom brands, such as Lezyne, made the floor pump sexy and vital again.

The saviour of Silca was Josh Poertner, the former technical director at Zipp. Poertner, who had always loved his own Eighties-vintage Silca, bought the company and immediately set about redesigning the ultimate floor pump. He was convinced he could create a better floor pump than anyone before, while remaining sympathetic to the traditional aesthetic of the original Pista.

In 2014 the new Silca SuperPista Ultimate won best in show at Interbike. Despite its £300 price tag, Poertner told *Cycling Weekly* that Silca, now relocated to Indianapolis, couldn't keep up with demand. "I know that the price is high, but I am confident that there will always be a market for a finely handcrafted tool that is beautiful, functional and built to last forever."

In other words, nothing has really changed at Silca.



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